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ESSAYS ON QUESTIONS OF BELIEF AND PRACTICE

THEOLOGY AND MORALITY

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BELIEF AND PRACTICE

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BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE Essays composing this volume have nearly all appeared in Reviews or Magazines during the last few years. The topics discussed in them are all, I believe, amongst those upon which opinion is now forming. The principle running through them, which I earnestly desire to commend by these illustrations to those who would arrive at the truth on questions of theology and social morality, is that instruction ought to be humbly sought, and by Christians more reverently than by any others, from the progressive development of life and knowledge.

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THEOLOGY AND MORALITY

THE DEBTS OF THEOLOGY TO SECULAR INFLUENCES.[1]

THE destructive action of secular movements on theology is a favourite topic of eminent and popular writers. They have no difficulty in showing that theology has been profoundly affected by the advances in knowledge and the social changes which belong to the modern period. Many theological beliefs have yielded to the direct assault of these agencies, or have been undermined by them until they became manifestly no longer tenable. There is an appearance of destruction in the work thus going on. But theology is not necessarily destroyed, or even impaired, by undergoing change. It is evidently possible for alterations in men's beliefs to be as beneficial to theology as the alarming ravages of the pruning-knife are to the tree. Changes that correct and deepen and enlarge

[1] The *Contemporary Review*, January 1871.

the prevailing conceptions about the things of God are of obvious advantage to theological science; and it will not be difficult to show what peculiar and inestimable services have thus been rendered to theology by independent secular movements.

It can never be an altogether agreeable experience to religious persons to be disturbed in their inherited belief. It is natural and right that they should be apprehensive and hesitating, and should even put themselves in a posture of defence, when they find that conceptions with which earnest faith has been closely blended are likely to be taken away from them. But if we have many instances to prove that the alterations forced on theological belief by the progress of civilization have had the effect of making that belief intrinsically better than it was before, we are warranted in looking to such action with hope and thankfulness rather than with dread. Though anxious, we ought not to be despondent; and so far from shutting ourselves up in wilful ignorance, we ought, for our religion's sake, to welcome new knowledge from every quarter.

The subject as a whole is a very large one, and can only be treated here under certain limitations. I propose to speak briefly of the movements which we perceive to be specially

affecting theology in our own time. It will not fall within this plan to discuss one of the most important of all the secular movements of the Christian period—the claiming of national life and independence. Its bearing indeed on theology has been momentous, and it is still of much significance. But its chief work in this respect was done at the time of the Reformation, when the national impulse, called by hostile theologians the heresy of nationalism, enabled a large part of Christendom to throw off the belief in a visible head of the Universal Church. Since that time, and mainly in consequence of the awakening which then stirred the nations of Europe, various movements have been gradually changing the complexion of men's thoughts. Let us take those which are associated with the following names:—Toleration or Religious Liberty, Democracy, Political Economy, Ethics, Physical Science. All these are still doing their work, or are only now beginning to do it; and each of them makes a definite contribution to the improvement of Theology.

Theology is an account of the nature and dealings of God. Christian theology is that account of God's nature and dealings which was given in its main features by Jesus Christ, and

by those who accepted him as the interpreter of the Divine will. Everything is an advance in theology which enables men to know God better, and to think of him more worthily—that is, more in accordance with reality. The history and words and institutions of Christ must always supply the substance of Christian theology. These original data can never be superseded. As they are things of life, they yield from time to time new growths. But men draw inferences, add notions of their own, confuse these with what has been transmitted to them, and so build up and alter theological systems. Theology has natural tendencies towards corruption. For example, religious enthusiasm gives birth to exaggerated and figurative language; it becomes a point of religious honour to hand down such language, which is gradually stiffened into propositions; and thus unreality is introduced. Again, nothing is more natural than that men should attribute to God their own modes of thought and feeling, supposing all the while that these have been declared by revelation to be Divine; and it is not long before such conceptions receive the stamp of common acceptance and Church authority. Christian tradition, therefore, is no competent guardian of theology, nor have professional theologians any adequate

interest in keeping it pure or promoting its genuine progress. The best theological ideas, indeed, may always be discovered in the theologians to whose devotion and tenderness the truest insight has been given. I believe there is no modern theological view which may not be found anticipated by Christian thinkers such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Luther. But their witness lies dormant till it wins a response in the common consciousness. And it appears to be the plan of Divine Providence to force upon men the revision of traditional theology by means of those advances in life and knowledge with which received traditions cannot reconcile themselves. Then the restrictions are broken through, the corruptions are purged away, and the nature of God is not only seen more truly as it is, but apprehended with a new freshness.

1. In this age and in this country we no longer speak of Toleration. The principle which fought its way to victory under that name is now described as the principle of religious liberty. In England previous political movements had substantially abolished religious persecution, and secured freedom for individuals in matters of faith and worship; the French Revolution carried this freedom in triumph through Europe and the world. Nothing now remains

for the most enthusiastic partisans of religious liberty to claim but the absolute equality in the State of all creeds and communions. It is needless to discuss here the various influences which have aided in producing these results. In part those influences have been religious, especially if we give this title to that free growth of divergences of opinion which was a natural product of the Reformation. But on the whole the demand for toleration and religious liberty may rightly be described as a secular movement. It drew its chief support from political justice, and it was vehemently condemned in its beginnings by the exponents of the dominant creeds. Its work in the secular interest may be said to be almost finished, and it has already done great service to theology; but its peculiar lesson may still be studied by theologians with advantage.

It was very natural that when Christians attained political power they should suppose it to be their duty to use the power to propagate and secure the Christian faith. That faith is extremely peremptory and exacting. It affirms that a true knowledge of God is the one thing needful for mankind; it claims the absolute devotion of all 'talents' to the cause of the kingdom of heaven. Supreme power in a State,

when it came into the hands of an earnest Christian, was a trust that might be used to lead men to their highest good and to preserve them from their worst danger. Christians argued that it was better for men to suffer in their bodies than that their souls should be exposed to risk. Therefore it was the duty of the civil power to suppress heresy, and with this view to threaten and punish heretics. The theory of persecution must be admitted to be a most plausible one, and there have been times when it has been assumed throughout Christendom almost without a solitary protest. To this day the Church of Rome does not repudiate it. Other Churches now disown it; but at the time of the Reformation the Protestant theologians were not at issue on this point with those of Rome. 'Persecution,' says Hallam, 'is the deadly original sin of the Reformed Churches, that which cools every honest man's zeal for their cause in proportion as his reading becomes more extensive.' If the matter had been left to theologians, it is not likely that they would have discovered the theory of persecution to be unchristian.

But theology, nevertheless, was grievously injured by it. According to the Apostolic

Gospel, it was the desire and purpose of God to win men to be his reconciled children. The Gospel appealed to the consciences and affections of men, asking for a surrender which could not be real unless it were free. The theory of an enforced orthodoxy tended inevitably to produce the impression that what God saw with pleasure was the spectacle of an orthodox world. But the whole world, it is conceivable, might be completely orthodox, every whisper of heretical opinion being silenced, and yet the souls of men might remain unquickened, unenlightened, unreconciled. A uniform correctness of creed not only cannot be in itself satisfactory to God, but it may become as distasteful and offensive to him as the offerings and appointed feasts of the Jewish ritual were when he said by the mouth of the prophet, 'They are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them.' What, then, the principle of religious liberty does for theology is this: it breaks up a false and dangerous ideal of the desire of God. It thereby constrains us to reflect what it is that God really wants. We perceive that he can be satisfied with nothing except the willing spiritual allegiance of the human heart. But the winning of the conscience and the affections is a work, as

each one may know in himself, requiring delicacy of treatment. We cannot imagine anyone to be inwardly convinced and attracted towards God either by being forbidden himself to ask a question, or by seeing his neighbour punished for saying out what seemed to him to be true. A compulsory and stereotyped orthodoxy is a field in which the intelligent apprehension of God is less likely to grow than even amidst the confusion of rival creeds.

True theology does not teach that liberty, in the sense of license, is to be worshipped as an end, or that it is a good thing for men to indulge every fancy or conceit of opinion that may suggest itself, or that guidance and restraint may not be helpful in fostering the tenderest affections. It leaves room for various judgments as to what the civil power should do or not do in the aim of helping truth against error. Its own business is to testify that under all circumstances what God desires is that men should come near to him in filial knowledge and love. And that respect for honesty and truthfulness of thought, which at once fosters and is fostered by freedom of opinion, assists theology to be true to its commission, and to appeal with openness and simplicity to the conscience of every man.

2. A similar misrepresentation of the mind of God is in process of being corrected by the steady advance of Democracy. This movement also received a prodigious impulse from the French Revolution; but the democratic tendency is one of older date and more continuous progress in this country and its offshoots. It has never perhaps been in alliance with theology, but the early incidents of the French Revolution attached to it the reputation of being expressly irreligious and anti-Christian. Religious teaching, from episcopal charges down to the lessons of the Sunday-school, was for a long time, as most of us can remember, in the habit of assuming that true religion was identified with government by the upper classes. The Dissenting bodies, it is true, combined religion to a considerable extent with democratic politics, and their religion was prevented from speaking so conservative a language; but the democratic politics entered into the combination from the secular side, and the Nonconformist advocates of popular rights were generally content with maintaining that there was no necessary incompatibility between the love of freedom in this world and the care of the soul for the next.

It is not easy without a good deal of discrimi-

nation to fix the relations of Christianity, in its Catholic and its Protestant forms respectively, to the democratic movement. On the one hand, it has always been the glory of Catholicism to vindicate the claims of the weaker classes to sympathy and help, and this principle has borne most important social fruit. On the other hand, Protestantism, with its traditions of independence and rebellion, has nourished a stubborn spirit of resistance to oppression, by the help of which many of the victories of democracy have been achieved. But we may safely say that neither from Catholic nor from Protestant theology could we extract any formal witness in favour of the acquisition of political power by the humbler and more numerous classes.

In this country an aristocratic system of society came down from the middle ages. The mediæval Church did much, it is universally acknowledged, to protect the poor and to elevate their condition. But as society was Christian in those days, Christianity was naturally identified with the existing order. The governing classes honoured the Church, and the Church desired to stand well with the governing classes. At the Reformation the theological movement was identified with the national, and this was

not democratic. The king and the nobility promoted and led the insurrection against Rome, and there was no revolutionary disturbance of the previous social order. It naturally came to pass therefore, when the new ecclesiastical system was settled, that the Church was intertwined with royalty and aristocracy. It confessed its old obligation to bear witness against tyranny and injustice, but it enjoined submission to the ruling powers, and exhorted the lower classes—and *à fortiori* the humblest—to keep their place, and not to aspire to any share in the government of the realm.

But the lower classes have not been content to stay in their places. Whatever the Church has taught, democracy has advanced irresistibly. Privilege after privilege has been wrenched out of the grasp of the favoured classes; power has gradually descended by the steps of the social stairs, until it has joined hands with the vast class at the bottom. At the present time it is a confessed fact, whether we like it or not, that the working class, if it had peculiar interests and were unanimously resolved to promote them, might dictate the policy of the empire. It is beginning to be acknowledged as a rational principle, that in the organization and legal arrange-

ments of society, whilst the good of the body as a whole should be sought, the most numerous and least fortunate sections have actually a better title to consideration than the rich and the few.

The proper effect of this change upon Christian theology is to awaken it to the rediscovery of its first teaching. It has never been wrong to declare that the New Testament is in favour of *order*. The authority and value of government for the securing of justice and social well-being are plainly insisted on in its pages, and loyalty is one of the virtues it commands. But where does it say that society ought to be organized with a view to the greater happiness of the rich and few? Where does it say that they ought to have all the power and the poor to have none? Our Lord laid down emphatically that in his kingdom—that is, in Christendom—the justification of superior authority would be in its capacity to *serve*. 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.' Critics who look at the Gospel history from the modern point of view, tell us with much truth that Jesus proclaimed a social revolution in the interest of the poor. He certainly declared that he was anointed to give good news to the poor, and to proclaim the

year of Jubilee. The meek, he said, were to inherit the earth. He always expressed sympathy with the lower classes rather than with the rich, and what was much more than words, he lived with them as one of themselves. The first Christians were for the most part poor men, and one of their teachers speaks with strong feeling against the rich. 'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.' 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low.' . St. Paul shows how men as Christians are raised or lowered to one level when he affirms that there is in Christ no distinction of Greek or Jew, of Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.

This witness in behalf of that which is properly human in all men as triumphing over distinctions of race and condition, is a theological doctrine which has always maintained its place somewhere in systems of Christian theology. But in past times there has been a sort of common understanding that it should not interfere with the actual relations of society. The progress of democracy asserts in another form the purpose of the Ruler of the world, that the lower classes shall not be regarded as existing

for the greater honour and pleasure of the upper. We can now see a new power in the revolutionary doctrines of the New Testament. We still do not find its authors inciting men to rebellion; the principle of order remains a sacred one in their teaching. But we recognise it as a design of God, manifested in Christ, to interfere thoroughly and effectually with aristocratic assumptions. The principles laid down by our Lord and his followers, when once we accept them as intended to remodel society, are perceived to involve consequences by the side of which the aims of ordinary Liberalism look pale. Theology is now constrained to teach that, according to the mind of God, the one comprehensive function of the rich and great is to assist in the elevation of the multitude.

3. The modern science of Political Economy has had frequent passages of arms with religion, and is still looked upon by many religious persons as thoroughly unchristian. It has acquired this character by marking with decided condemnation some habits which traditional Christianity had fostered.

One of these is almsgiving. 'Give to him that asketh thee,' said Jesus, 'and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.'

This is only the earliest of a number of precepts by which practical kindness towards the needy and suffering is inculcated in the New Testament, as one of the most characteristic virtues of the kingdom of heaven. From the first days Christians set themselves to do what their Lord and his Apostles had enjoined. They sought to lay up treasure in heaven by giving relief to the poor. Wherever they saw want and destitution, they held themselves bound to give alms out of their greater abundance. Rich men, when their hopes or their fears were touched, were induced to give on a large scale; and great revenues were devoted in perpetuity to various modes of beneficence. It became evident by the time of the Reformation that the monasteries from which doles were prodigally dispensed drew about them crowds of lazy beggars, to whom it was more agreeable to live on alms than to work for their bread. Protestant Christians have continually had this warning before their minds and on their lips, and it has shown them that there is a danger in uncontrolled almsgiving. This much is generally admitted; and everyone will acknowledge it to be abuse of charity when sturdy mendicants are encouraged and enabled by the alms of the pious to lead a

life of idleness. But that actual distress should be known to exist and the gifts of charity be withheld seems to most Christians a violation of the precepts of Christ, as well as a quenching of natural kindness. It must be right, they think, to give to him that needeth, and they will leave the consequences to God.

Another habit of the same category is that of marrying early and in trust. Religion has looked favourably on this habit. 'God himself bade men be fruitful and multiply. Let young people who fall in love marry, or they may do worse. God will provide food for the mouths he sends into the world.' Our Lord, it is urged, exhorted his disciples to a simple dependence on the Heavenly Father who feeds the sparrows, and condemned anxious care about the morrow. To discourage early marriages on prudential grounds has been stigmatized by religious persons as a hard, godless, immoral policy.

As regards human life in general, it may be said that the industrial theory of it has been treated for the most part as a rival, if not as an enemy, by theological interests. The old traditional teaching of the Church represented it as the business of the Christian to prepare himself

for the life to come. The things of this life were snares which he ought as far as possible to shun. The love of money was the root of all evil; it was extremely difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The man who accumulated wealth was a fool not to remember that at any moment his soul might be required of him. Mediæval theology, in an uncompromising spirit, asserted the superior credit and reasonableness of a simply ascetic life. It was good that a man should renounce wealth, marriage, comfort, should withdraw himself from the occupations and interests of secular society, and devote himself wholly to the pursuit of salvation. Protestantism recoiled from such a condemnation of the present world, and its trumpet has given an uncertain sound on this question. But its attitude towards industrialism and secular civilization has been generally that of toleration and compromise. Its theology has recommended detachment from the world in the interest of the soul and its salvation. Life is still pictured as a pilgrimage through a trying wilderness to Paradise. But for various reasons of necessity and expediency Christians, it is explained, may accommodate themselves innocently and judiciously to the exigencies of

this world. Making money is a thing of the earth, earthy; but money is a powerful instrument, and true Christians will not forego the opportunities it gives for promoting the cause of religion.

Economic science, by studying the facts which come within its scope and tracing effects to causes, has arrived at decided conclusions on these points. Under its teaching we know now many things of which the best men were formerly ignorant. We see how carelessness is directly and inevitably produced by the chance of obtaining alms easily in time of need; and carelessness is the mother of idleness and sensual indulgence as well as of destitution. Benevolence on the part of the rich may *create* what the French expressively call *la misère*; it has no power to remove it. Where there is a hard struggle for the means of living, to marry and multiply without thought of the future is the way to keep down to the lowest point the condition of the whole labouring class. The accumulation of capital by saving is the only means of providing employment; and he who makes a fortune and invests it does much more for the poor than he who gives away all that he receives to the neediest people about him. The science that

establishes these conclusions points, as a matter of course, to certain rules of conduct. If you wish well to the mass of mankind, you will endeavour to check waste, to increase production, to encourage industry and forethought and self-restraint. You will be extremely cautious not to put temptations in the way of the poor, by which—weak as they are by nature and circumstance—they may be seduced into thriftlessness. You will throw yourself heartily into the industrial efforts by which the fabric of material prosperity is built up.

This economic doctrine is perplexing to those who have received the theological tradition. There is much in it of which they cannot but approve, but still the care of the soul, the trust of the believer in Divine Providence, the grace of charity, appear to be rudely jostled by the duties thus prescribed. But let Christians reflect upon their own proper *aims*, and inquire into the tendency of the habits which economy condemns to promote those aims. Then let them do justice to the higher and ultimate objects of the economists. They will find that the modern science convicts them of a fatal departure from their own highest principles, and restores to them an ideal which they had almost forgotten.

In their readiness to minister without forethought to the bodily wants of their neighbours, Christians have really neglected the care due to their souls. They have encouraged a dependence on alms and rates, in place of a dependence on the Providence of God. Instead of manifesting a genuine charity or love, they have indolently put stumbling-blocks and occasions of falling in the way of weak brothers. They have played the part of the unworthy parents who spoil their children. The impeachment of political economy against religion is that it has unintentionally, but carelessly and selfishly, done injuries to the moral and spiritual character of the poorer classes. The Christian Church, in the blind following of a theological tradition, has helped to make men idle, sensual, gamblers, liars, regardless of natural affection. If there is truth in this terrible complaint, as there certainly is, Christians ought to accept with gratitude as well as shame the revelations thus forced upon them. For it is the business of the Christian Church to build up a spiritual body of thoughtful men, understanding their duties and striving earnestly to discharge them. The Church is, in short, warned by political economy to keep the theological ideal of society more steadily in view,

and not by any obedience to the letter to defeat the spiritual ends of the precepts of Christ.

4. Under the head of Ethics, it will be enough to speak of the influence exerted by the improved conceptions of Justice upon theology.

Justice, or righteousness, is a great theological subject. The account of it given by the original Christian doctrine is somewhat as follows :—God is righteous, or just, in the sense that he is the author and life of the spiritual order of the universe. Man is to be righteous in response to and dependence upon God ; and his righteousness will show itself in conforming to the divine order. Perfect submission to God as the ordainer of all the relations of persons and things, and a practical fulfilment of those relations in which a man finds he has a part, are the main features of human righteousness as the New Testament exhibits it. God is represented as showing in the manifestation of his Son the nature and principles of the order which he upholds, which is essentially a spiritual one, and as purposing to subdue the world to harmony through reconciliation and sonship. He is just, in being always faithful to the original order, and in seeking to make it prevail over the confusion with which it is struggling. His

righteousness places men in the relation of sonship towards himself, and would be satisfied by their being conformed to the image of his Son.

This theological account of righteousness, which finds it in fatherhood and sonship and in other relations dependent on these, was soon invaded, in the tradition of the Christian Church, by the barbarous notions of justice which haunt the unregulated dealings of men with one another. In such intercourse the justice recognised is apt to be the wild justice of revenge. When a man has been wronged, his resentment demands suffering to gratify it. An injury is expiated by adequate pain or loss inflicted on the offender. The *lex talionis* regulates punishment. The mind being set on *suffering* as what is demanded by justice in case of transgression, and as what when obtained satisfies it, it comes to be thought that the suffering of one may be substituted for that of another, and that it makes no vital difference to justice whether the offender himself suffers or some one else in his place. Rude quantitative equivalences, by their hold on the popular imagination, gain the mastery over moral conceptions, and assume to stand for spiritual relations. Endless examples might be given of these mechanical notions of

justice; but there is none more illustrative than the well-known story of the legislator Zaleucus, who, when his son had become liable to the penalty of the loss of both his eyes, gave one of his own that his son might still have one eye remaining. If this story be told to a child or a savage, it will probably excite no misgivings as to the satisfactory nature, in the eye of justice, of this arrangement. Such notions began to work upon the terms in which God's righteousness was described by the preachers of the Gospel and upon the facts of our Lord's history; and under this influence statements became current which acquired in course of time a recognised theological authority. God's justice, outraged by man's sins, was said to have demanded a satisfaction in the form of suffering. As the holiness of God was magnified by religious zeal, and the conscience bore its witness of human culpability, it seemed that nothing short of endless pain could atone for each man's sins. Infinite justice demanded an infinite penalty. But the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross was offered in place of the torments of men. His suffering was for a few hours, but, multiplied by his divinity, it might be of equivalent worth in the eyes of divine justice to the endless pains

of all men. The merit of Christ might be transferred to believers, as the guilt of Adam had been communicated to all his posterity. By such imputation some men, without any desert of their own, might be enabled to escape the general doom.

This is sometimes called the 'forensic' way of regarding salvation and the atonement. But no modern court of law, at least in what we call civilized countries, would admit the principles assumed. That punishment should be proportioned to the dignity of the person offended; that the proper demand of justice is a fixed equivalent of suffering; that it is a matter of indifference whether this be paid by the offender or by some other—these are assumptions which criminal law as at present administered would promptly repudiate. And every ethical system treats the justice of the criminal court, at its best, as necessarily superficial and imperfect. Moralists see that the relations of human beings to one another and to the moral law of the universe are not to be expressed in legal formulas. They search into the nature of justice, and are agreed at least that it means an intelligent conformity to some spiritual order; it would seem monstrous to them to talk of justice being in any

high sense *satisfied* by the infliction of suffering. They speculate on the mystery of the connection of pain with goodness, and recoil unanimously from the idea of suffering as a satisfying end. The more profoundly they meditate on sin and righteousness, the more thoroughly are they penetrated with the feeling that these are *personal* attributes, and that they lose their meaning if they are separated from the consciousness and history of the individual.

The divergence between the traditional ethics of theology and the ideas of modern jurisprudence and morality is so wide that it has become impossible to overlook it. Attempts are made to sustain the former by appeals to the universal instincts of mankind; but these are the instincts which are equally well known to moralists, and which they unhesitatingly associate with barbarism. A different and a desperate policy is, to lay down the principle that God's justice is not of the same kind as man's, and that we cannot argue from the one to the other. But this is in glaring contradiction to the language of Scripture and of the greatest theologians, and it runs a mine under their whole moral teaching. And it would be a singular thing that the justice of the kingdom

of heaven should differ from righteousness as conceived by civilized men only in resembling the wild justice of primitive society.

The better way is to confess at once that modern ethics are truer than the so-called forensic system of theological tradition. Modern theology should humble itself and go to school, to get its errors corrected by ethical science. It will learn nothing but good from its most subtle and refined appreciations. It will see with wonder and delight that whatever is lofty and attractive in the most anti-theological morality is in harmony with New Testament doctrine. The righteousness of the Apostolic theology is conspicuously one of persons and spiritual relations. It uses punishment as a means, but never pays homage to suffering as an end. God's justice can only be satisfied by a living active harmony of intelligences and wills throughout his universe. Its object is the perfect order of the future. True theological ethics ought not only to be stronger and better grounded, but also more progressive and willing to learn and fruitful, than those of any secular school.

5. We come lastly to the lessons which theology has to learn from Physical Science. And these are questions of the present day more

than any of the others which we have been considering, because it is in this age and in our own generation that Physical Science has been making some of its most momentous advances.

After much exchanging of angry and contemptuous judgments between the partisans of religion and those of science, there is a tendency now to compromise the conflict by the use of general and hypothetical dicta like these:—That there can be no contradiction between Religion and Science; that God's word in the Bible must necessarily agree with his work in nature; and that when we know more of both, their apparent discrepancies will vanish, and we shall perceive them to be in perfect harmony. Some years ago there was more confidence on the side of religion that the mode of reconciliation could immediately be found. An ingenious interpretation of a text would suggest the jubilant feeling expressed by the preacher who exclaimed, Scripture and Science have met together, Genesis and Geology have kissed each other. The comparative diffidence and willingness to hold opinion in suspense which now characterise the theological world are wholesome signs; but even now there is danger of a false trust being fostered, and it will

be for the advantage of theology that it should make itself more distinctly a learner in the presence of the new revelations of scientific discovery.

The great principle which it has been the pride of science in these days to affirm and illustrate, and to which the most enterprising scientific men are unwilling to admit that there can be any exceptions in the history of the universe, is that of *continuous evolution*. The chief interest of many special discoveries is that they extend the visible domain of this principle. A large amount of evidence has been brought together in support of the thesis that, in the working out of the incessant changes and modifications of the physical world, force neither perishes nor is newly created. It only assumes new forms. Its Protean transmutations have easily imposed upon the common observer; but lynx-eyed Science has caught it in the act of changing, and the force which has been known as heat has been recognised again under the disguise of electricity. The keenest scientific ambition is putting forth all its energies to prove that life itself is evolved, through natural transformations of force, and therefore without what is called a new creation, from non-vital

elements. All that is, according to these views, is but a re-arrangement of that which has been. There is growth and progress, but at each step the change is only that which followed inevitably from the natural play of forces in the existing conditions. New worlds take shape and place; new species of living creatures appear; but all is brought about by gradual and regular evolution.

Old notions about creation are obviously disturbed by this doctrine. It is difficult to fix the precise meaning which the terms used at any time to describe the action of the Creator have conveyed to men's minds. Due allowance being made for figurative expression, and for the mysterious nature of the subject, much of the older language about creation may be regarded as not incompatible with scientific views: and it would be unreasonable to insist that it was always understood and meant in the most superficial sense. But it is safe to say that creative action was always associated with breaches or interruptions of continuity in the natural order. God, it was supposed, introduced something new into the total amount of existence when he created. This idea of creation encouraged men to think of the divine

action in general as an action of interference. There was a certain regular course of things, but Divine Providence was constantly interposing to make them go differently. Miracles were regarded as proving that God could suspend the laws of nature when he pleased. To persons trained in these modes of apprehending divine action, it must be something of a shock to find all that goes on in the universe explained by the principle of continuous evolution. They will be apt to protest that God is being explained out of the creation.

It is a trial also to the traditional forms of faith, that the boundaries of time as well as of space should be pushed away out of sight to such an infinite distance. The gradual development of which science speaks has consumed lengths of time which confound the faculty of calculation. If we place a Creator at the beginning of things, to produce the required force which has been working ever since, of what interest is he to us, calling into existence at that remote date the unimaginably formless elements of the world? Piety may claim back in despair the God who made the sun and moon and stars, the earth and all that is in it, five or six thousand years ago, who has since exhibited his

power from time to time in miracles, and who interposes by adaptations of the natural order for the carrying out of his gracious designs and in answer to the prayers of his worshippers.

The same discoveries which stretch out past time so amazingly, affect the common theology through their bearing on the Bible history. It is not only in the six days of creation that science finds a stumbling-block, but in the story of Adam and Eve, of the generations before the Flood, of the Flood itself, and so on. If we add to the conclusions of physical science those of historical research and of the comparative criticism of religions and myths, it is impossible not to feel that an implicit belief in the Old Testament narratives is exposed to most serious difficulties. Any creed, therefore, which is built up on the assumption of the perfect authenticity of the earlier Scriptures is likely to be rudely shaken.

Either great injury or some important gain ought certainly to accrue to our theology from such a disturbance of the traditional doctrine concerning creation and the Bible. We have reason to hope that the influence exerted will turn out in the end to be a beneficial one. It is well that we should be driven out of narrow

and mechanical conceptions of the action of the Creator. Such conceptions are natural and inevitable in a certain stage of knowledge; whilst we are children we may speak, think, and understand as children. But the childish forms of thought are only excusable, they are not to be permanently clung to. The moment it is possible to rise above them they begin to be restrictive, confusing, and injurious. It is not really good for our faith that we should look upon the world as going by chance or fate, and upon God as a powerful Being who can interfere at will with its natural course. The kind of religion founded on such notions is not the best suited to raise and purify and strengthen the soul. The scientific view constrains us to think of God as in everything or in nothing. If we will not be without God in the world, we must learn to regard nature, in its order and tendencies, as Divine. We are now under less temptation to fix the Creator at some beginning of things as his place; his present work is more interesting than his past, that which he is about to do still more interesting than that which he has done. God is about us and before us as well as behind us. If we find it difficult, as it is idle to deny that we shall, to

associate the sense of personal relations and personal action with a Creator whose work we seek chiefly in that energy which sustains the progress of the world,' we have the more inducement to think of God first in the character in which he claims our Christian worship, as the Father of our spirits, desiring to bring us into harmony with his perfect mind. It is the knowledge of God as the Righteous Father that concerns us most; to know him as a Creator comes in the next degree. The faith taught us by Christian theology is that he whom we know through Christ is the life and order of the universe; and our apprehensions of the mode in which God is related to the universe will rightly vary with our knowledge of the universe itself. It would have been wise of Christians not to tie themselves down to anything more technical and precise on this subject than the broad 'Pantheism'[1] of St. Paul.

It cannot be denied that the tendency of the scientific view of nature is adverse to a belief in miracles. Under its influence we require that a miracle should introduce itself to us with

[1] 'One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.' 'Of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things.'

a strong recommendation before we consent to pay any attention to it at all. It is true now, as has been alleged, that instead of a miracle commending a cause, the cause must commend the miracle. We shall believe in the wonders wrought by Christ because we believe in Christ.

But in so doing we shall only be taking the mental attitude which our Lord himself approved. That men should believe because they saw signs and wonders was a thing worthless in his eyes. But he was willing that those who believed in him should see illustrations of his saving power, and so have their faith increased and enlightened.

The change of attitude, again, with regard to the Bible, which science is forcing upon us, only brings us back to the Apostolic principle. The faith of the Christian Church in its first days certainly did not repose upon an infallible book. 'Not the letter, but the spirit,' was St. Paul's maxim, and he included in 'the letter' the words of documents which he held sacred. It cannot, indeed, excite any surprise that the reverence of Christendom for the books contained in the canon of Scripture should have passed into an idolatry of the Book; or that Protestantism, which had emancipated itself

from the despotism of Rome by appeals to the Bible, should have substituted the infallibility of the Bible for that of the Church. But however natural was the letter-worship, its effect was none the less to numb and cramp the faith of Christendom. It was the design of God that the world should be governed by the spirit, and not by texts. The sacred volume is therefore exhibited in the face of the world, to the incredulous dismay of the general multitude of Christians, as not wholly trustworthy. The Christian will no longer be able to avail himself of the short and easy method of the syllogism, 'All that is in the Bible is true; this is in the Bible, therefore this is true.' But the loss ought to be a great gain. The Word of God interpreted by history and life is a grander object of faith than even the Bible. Theology ceases to be the mere exegesis of documents, and becomes an attempt to explain and commend to the human intelligence the spiritual realities with which men have to do.

I have alluded to St. Paul's habit of associating the word '*all*' with the name of God. On the whole, it may be contended that the New Testament in general is free from the mechanical notions of creative action and interference,

from the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, and from the cosmological theories, which science has had to condemn in the traditional theologies. The New Testament will not hinder but encourage us in aiming at the most spiritual apprehensions of Divine energy. It testifies of *order* as the necessary product of the Divine mind in Nature, and the order it points to is not dead or stagnant, but instinct with life and ever working itself out in higher and more perfect forms, having its seat in the loftiest provinces of being, but including in its dominion whatever is most outward and transitory.

Seeing thus how much our formal thoughts about God may owe to movements which do not invoke his name, and which come into collision with the theology of their time, we shall surely turn with increased reverence to him who is the God of the world as well as of the Church, and who actually governs whilst we are speculating about him. Our faith, we are admonished, is in God himself, and to know God is our supreme attainment, from whatever quarter the knowledge may come. The Divine nature rises above systems and speculations, the legitimate

object of these efforts of the human understanding, but never comprehended by them. From those heights a new awe should descend upon our faith.

But let us notice how the standing of theology is affected, as these powers of the spiritual world act and react on one another. In the first place, we are under no necessity to admit that Christian theology is being disintegrated or undermined by the encroachment of secular ideas. Decayed and unstable props, in which false confidence had been placed, are removed, but the foundation stands sure. If theology is improved, if its conceptions of the Divine ways are made deeper and wider and more real, then we have good reason to contend that it is strengthened, and not weakened. If we retire from some positions which are now untenable, we see that they were never wisely occupied, and we remove to those which we ought to have held all along. Theology, like other sciences, is not injured by correction. On the contrary, to purge it of errors is to do it the greatest possible service. There is the more reason for taking this hopeful view, because we can not only see that science is dangerous rather to the fungoid growths than to the health and life of the old theology, but

are further able to show that those larger apprehensions which seem to be produced and are at all events urged upon us by modern progress, were never wholly wanting to theology. As we read what has been left us by devout Christians, from the Apostles downwards, we constantly find what we had supposed to be modern thoughts anticipated [1] in their reflections. In the second place, we are encouraged to believe in theological

[1] I have been struck by an unexpected instance of this anticipation given in Miss Wedgwood's book on John Wesley (p. 78). The following passage occurs in the writings of John Gambold, a clergyman who joined the Moravians, and who died in 1771:—'However common it is, it must ever be atheism to term any event *natural*, with the intent to deny that it is *divine*. . . . It is impossible to conceive any religion at all, any trust, resignation, or gratitude towards the Deity, upon any other foundation' (than that of the acknowledgment of all things as divine). 'For what a dreary void are we left in, what a sullen and total suspense of all those sweetest emotions of the soul towards its Maker, which are to it what respiration is to the body, the moment the least exception is imagined from the general rule, that "the finger of God is in all things"! As on the one hand, with respect to such an exceptional instance, there would be no intelligent and gracious Being for us properly to honour, love, and trust in, to supplicate and thank, in that event; so on the other, if but some things—were they ever so few—did come to pass without Him, more might, and then why not all?'

'Miracles were such simple instances' (of God's dealing with man) 'as by their peculiar evidence were intended to serve for a key to a thousand less clear; such uncommon events as were designed to explain what is called the common course of nature —they were calculated *to claim on the part of God that regular and continual agency which He has* in the elementary motions and sublunary events.'

progress, because we can see where the forces are by which the advance is to be promoted. It is clear that we cannot trust the cause of theology to the religious instincts of mankind, or to the expository labours of divines. From such agencies corruption and formalism are always to be dreaded. The hope of theology is rather in movements outside of its own province. As human life becomes richer and human knowledge is enlarged, theology will be supplied with materials for new growth. There is an actual progress in the world, and in this we may claim that theology should share. It will be the interest of religious men to promote and to study secular progress, in order that they may know the ways of God more truly. We may still be persuaded that special inspiration will be given to the most earnest faith and devotion; but the inspiration will often come through the channel of suggestion from the outside world; and the best thoughts of the few will not be the ruling assumptions of the many, until they can enter into combination with those ideas of the age by which common life is moulded.

THE RELATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN THEORY OF DUTY TO UNIVERSAL MORALITY.[1]

We Christians have for ourselves a certain theory of duty. We find the principles of it in our sacred writings. It is expounded and enforced in our churches. There are, we know, very considerable variations in the modes in which it is interpreted; and it very often happens that Christian teachers speaking to fellow-Christians give advice and use appeals which might be addressed by any man to any other men. But it is, nevertheless, obviously true that there is a Christian manner of life professedly grounded on Christian assumptions, having claims on those who acknowledge, and not having the same kind of claims on those who do not acknowledge, those assumptions. The ethics of the pulpit in their most characteristic form are intended for believers only. How then do we who accept the properly Christian ethics stand towards the morality of men in

[1] The *Fortnightly Review*, July 1869.

general? This is a question which forces itself upon any Christian who looks outside the present life of his own communion, and takes an interest in the affairs of the world. It is hardly necessary at this time to refer to the opinion—though it has been held by the most earnest Christians—according to which there is no such thing as morality at all, except in the sense of some indispensable worldly conventions, for the non-elect, or the unconverted; which has denounced the best acts of non-Christians as nothing better than splendid sins, and has refused to have any other conception of men in general than that of creatures walking blindly to their ruin. Practically we may regard this way of thinking as now repudiated by responsible Christians. And therefore they are called upon to realise to themselves, and to explain to others, what are the relations between their morality and common morality. Does the word Duty express for them two different sets of ideas? Has the Christian, besides his own ethics, to adopt another system for more general uses? Is he compelled by his own doctrines to choose one rather than another of the systems of morality which he finds competing in the world? It will be my endeavour in this paper to show that,

with legitimate interpretations, the Christian theory of duty becomes available in a very adequate and complete degree as a universal system of morality.

I must briefly state what would be generally accepted as the Christian conception of duty. We believe that we are, by our higher nature, God's children. It is our duty to be true children of God. God has revealed himself in a Son, so that we know in an appreciable degree what God is, and what his children should be. We are to yield him filial affections, and to imitate his nature. The chief features of the Divine Nature are righteousness and love, and we, accordingly, ought to become righteous and loving. But the constitutional relation of man to God is such that dependence on God is a condition of moral life. The just man lives by faith. The will of God is what the Christian has to do, and it is by trust and self-surrender that he becomes able to do it. This statement would probably seem to all Christians too bald and incomplete to be taken as anything like an adequate account of the principles of their morality. Some would like to add to it one development or qualification, some another. But Christian morality must always, I appre-

hend, have for its cardinal assumption sonship toward God, and, for its sphere and code, the affections proper to that sonship, and to the mutual relations amongst human beings which it involves.

Outside of the Church we find systems of ethical science endeavouring to establish themselves, in which no account is taken of such a filial relation, or of such filial duties. The field of ethical controversy is in the main occupied by two rival schools, that of intuitive or spiritualist, and that of inductive or utilitarian morality. Just now, fresh life has been thrown into the conflict between the two schools. A gallant but evidently somewhat rash assault has been made upon the utilitarians by Mr. Lecky, and has been hotly repelled in their name by the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*. The conflict is full of interest and instruction. It is easy to see that the intuitional moralists are most in sympathy with theological views, and that the utilitarians —though Mr. Lecky may be unadvised in saying that their creed is practically incompatible with belief in a God—make it their business for the most part to explain human life to its roots without reference to God. But it is generally assumed, on both sides, that the ethical contro-

versy should be carried on without the introduction of theological elements; and, for various reasons, intuitional moralists who have been not only theists, like Mr. Lecky, but undoubted Christians, have thought it best to argue moral questions upon grounds which are presumably common to themselves and their opponents, and therefore to keep their theology in the background. Paley is an exception of some importance to these latter remarks. He was a utilitarian moralist, adopting what other utilitarians have thought a low standard, and at the same time the will of God and a future life were necessary elements in his system. But, as a rule, Christians are expected to maintain the intuitive morality without making their Christianity a ground of it. On this point I may express the general feeling in the words of the late Professor Grote, a clergyman and sincere Christian. The position to be held, he says, is this :—

> That morality *suggests* religion, and that the *more right* morality is, the more it suggests, and must suggest, the *true* religion: but that morality is in itself independent of anything which can, with significance, be called actual religion, and that all the great notions of morality are suggested independently of any distinctively religious considerations. This latter prin-

ciple appears to me to be of prime importance, for two reasons: the one, that without it morality cannot furnish any independent support to definite religion—any argument, *e. g.*, in support of the truth of our Christian revelation—and to me it furnishes the greatest; the other, that we want morality to have its full force, as morality, under *false* religions as well as under the true, and not to be *only* valid for those who acknowledge this latter.[1]

I quote these words with great respect, but the considerations I have mentioned, as to the exhaustive pretensions of the properly Christian law of duty, make me unable to agree with them.

In observing the battle between the intuitive and the inductive moralists, it may be noticed that the antagonists do not both bring their strength to bear upon the same point. The most important division in moral science is that between the moral *standard* and the moral *sanction*. The former answers the question, How do we find out and know what is right? The latter answers the question, What constrains us to do it? We can all say, 'I ought to do what is right.' But inquirers will ask, either—Why ought I? or, Why is this or that right? Now utilitarians urge, that the criterion of right-

[1] From an unpublished letter.

ness in an action is its tendency to promote the general well-being or happiness; and the position is one which it is extremely difficult to assail. Intuitive moralists urge, that we have instinctive preferences and a consciousness of obligation, which incline us *à priori* to what is right; that Right asserts an authority over us, which we naturally acknowledge. In these contentions each party is strong, and it does not appear, so far, that there is any direct contradiction between them. But if utilitarians affirm that what we call the authority of conscience is nothing but impressions of pleasure collected by experience and brought to bear in the form of constraint upon individuals by law and social opinion, and that all thought and feeling and action are only modes of molecular activity, or if intuitionalists deny that a tendency to promote well-being is a sound test of right action, then an undoubted antagonism arises. If, however, we are at liberty to take from each school what we choose and to leave the rest, we may find ourselves very much disposed to pay deference to the criterion by which the utilitarians would discover what is right, and at the same time to believe with the *à priori* moralists that human nature is so made as to recognise the inherent

authority of what is right, whenever and however it has been discovered.

The moral standard for the Christian must be the will of God; nor can his moral sanction be anything else than the same will of God. That which is right for us to do is what God wills. The reason why we ought to do it is because God wills it. There is nothing more ultimate or fundamental to the Christian than these two principles, which thus coalesce into one.

But when we have called the will of God our rule and standard, it becomes necessary to explain how we are to learn what the will of God is. The first impulse with a great number of Christians is to pronounce that we learn it from the Bible. An innocent dictum of this kind, prompted by the loyalty and reverence which Protestants have been taught to cherish towards the Bible, gives great advantages to hostile reasoners, and is summarily accepted by them as the Christian theory of the standard of morality. It is easy to show that the Bible cannot serve as such a standard; and it is equally easy to show that in the New Testament, and in all the more authoritative utterances of Christian belief, we do not find such a character ascribed to the Bible. The authentic Christian theory may be

stated as follows :—The great principles of the will of God, and those which should govern all human action, have been exhibited in the most perfect and impressive form in the life of the Son of man. These principles commend themselves so naturally to the human conscience that they will never be honestly denied by anyone. They are such as justice, truth, self-control, love. In by far the greater part of human life these principles are of themselves sufficient to guide and determine conduct. But they do not settle beforehand what ought to be done in all circumstances. New circumstances raise new questions. One step towards greater perfection suggests another step. How, in such cases, are Christians to ascertain what is the will of God? We might answer, speaking most broadly, that help of every kind is to be willingly accepted. Such a criterion as that of congruity with what is already known and thoroughly trusted will be of great use. But on the whole the new principle or mode of action will have to be *proved*. Experience is the great test of accordance with the will of God. How does it work? is the question which the devout Christian is bound to ask concerning any innovation in life. The question is asked with confidence by Christians, because

they believe that the conditions of human life do not come by chance, but are divinely ordered. The verdict of experience is necessarily the judgment of the Divine Ruler. This is the plain and reiterated teaching of St. Paul, and this was the rule on which the first Christians consciously and deliberately acted. The prepossessions of a devout mind will be rich in suggestions, but they can never afford to be independent of facts. It will always be necessary to prove by trial, δοκιμάζειν, what the will of God is.

With regard to the great questions which mark the line of moral progress, this has always been the legitimate Christian policy. I do not for a moment mean to say that Christians in general have faithfully followed it. But they would have been better Christians, as well as more useful to the world, if they had. And, though not firmly observed, that policy may be distinctly traced in the history of Christendom. In regulating customs as to marriage, slavery, and other dominant institutions of life,—in deciding upon the comparative claims of religion, of country, and of family,—whilst hints and suggestions have generally come from the aspirations of Christian hearts, the testimony of experience has been confessed by the greater

Christian teachers to be sacred, and has been accepted as the final judgment.

And the question how a thing would work, whether experience was in favour of it or against it, could not substantially differ from the question whether its tendency was to promote the well-being of mankind or not. In other words, Christian judgment has submitted to the utilitarian or experiential test. The will of God is the real good of mankind. We cannot for a moment allow that there can be any possible divergence between the two standards. It is true that utilitarians affirm that good is happiness, and happiness is pleasure, and I admit that there is something extremely distasteful to the Christian habit of mind in making pleasure the aim and end of existence. But then we find that this notion, *in the same sense*, is almost equally distasteful to the modern utilitarian. The selfish theory is utterly and conclusively abandoned by the highest utilitarian authorities.[1]

[1] See for example Mill's 'Utilitarianism,' pp. 22–24. On the other hand, the self-regarding theory has been reasserted in one of the most remarkable of recent ethical discussions ('The Morals of Expediency and Intuition,' *Pall Mall Gazette* of June 5th and 8th), by a writer who combines the principles of Bentham and Paley. This vigorous thinker says that the utilitarian answer to the question, Why ought I to do what is right? is, Because it will conduce to my greatest happiness :

They appear to call for the unreserved sacrifice and destruction of himself, if a man can thereby promote largely the general happiness of his fellow-men. And when we find that they also eagerly insist upon a difference of dignity in pleasures, setting the æsthetic above the sensual, and the moral above the æsthetic, I do not see that we need have any quarrel with them upon this point of the nature of well-being.

Mr. Lecky, speaking on the side of intuitional morality, is rash enough to allege that the higher kind of virtue is *not* of a nature to

and he endeavours to prove that the very question, Why ought I? cannot be thoroughly understood except so as necessarily to imply such an answer. But he holds that the probability of rewards and punishments in a future state must affect the expectation of happiness in an important degree. The principle affirmed by Mr. Mill, that a man is bound to give up his own happiness without reserve or hope, if he can thereby promote the greater happiness of others, will be felt by Christians to be a strained and unnatural one, binding a needless burden on men. According to Christian belief, he who casts himself away will *find himself*. We are encouraged not to care for ourselves, because God cares for us. In some respects those who start from the Christian relation between men and God, will rather agree with the writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* than with Mr. Mill. But there is an important difference between his conception of God and theirs. Whilst he thinks of God chiefly as wielding the promises and threats—especially the threats—of the future world, they would take the most perfect ideal of parental guidance and filial trust as illustrating what God is to men, and what men should be to God.

promote the well-being of mankind, or at least to promote such social happiness as he conceives to be the ideal of utilitarians. He takes the apparently high line of advocating, on the ground of our native instincts of preference and approbation, a virtue which not only does not make happiness its aim, but is actually likely to diminish the amount of human happiness. It is inconceivable that anyone accustomed to believe in God as the Creator of human society, should think that there can be a virtue which would in the long run have such an effect. Christians have always assumed and taught that obedience to the will of God is the way to true happiness. They will agree with Mr. Mill when he says,—

> If men believe, as most profess to do, in the goodness of God, those who think that conduciveness to the general happiness is the essence, or even only the criterion, of good, must necessarily believe that it is also that which God approves.[1] If it be a true belief that God desires, above all things, the happiness of his creatures, and that this was his purpose in their creation, utility is not only not a godless doctrine, but more profoundly religious than any other. . . . A utilitarian who believes in the perfect goodness and wisdom of God, necessarily believes that whatever God has thought fit to reveal on

[1] 'Utilitarianism,' p. 41.

the subject of morals, must fulfil the requirements of utility in a supreme degree. . . . Whatever aid religion, either natural or revealed, can afford to ethical investigation, is as open to the utilitarian moralist as to any other.[1]

Let us take as an example some question within the domain of moral science, upon which there would now be a difference of opinion amongst well-informed persons. It is a remarkable fact that, whilst there is so much diversity as to the *grounds* of duty, there is so little as to the duties themselves. But such a subject as the relation of women to men may be considered as belonging to morals, and upon this it may be assumed that at the present moment people seriously differ. Some would advocate greatly-increased facility of divorce, an absolutely equal contract in marriage, identical rights for each sex before the law, and other innovations affecting the position of women. To a certain extent Christians may be said to be prepossessed against such proposals. A theory of marriage is laid down in the New Testament, which is represented as having the sanction of God Himself. To give up marriage altogether would make a great rent in the New Testament teach-

[1] 'Utilitarianism,' pp. 31, 32.

ing. And certainly the general effect of that teaching is to persuade us to regard the marriage tie as sacred, and not to be dissolved. A theory which treats marriage as a matter of convenience is repugnant to our Christian instincts. But we Christians are quite ready to justify the most reverent view of marriage as conducive to the well-being of mankind. We have no fear of its being proved by any appeal to experience that the institution of marriage is an injurious one. If evidence unfavourable to any existing custom in the department of marriage laws or the legal condition of women begins to accumulate, we shall probably be led by our Christian prejudices to scrutinise it with severity, and we shall feel an interest in meeting it with arguments from experience on the other side. But should the unfavourable evidence be manifestly the stronger, it is vain to suppose that we shall be unaffected by it. Gradually, perhaps slowly, but surely, we shall come to recognise the testimony of experience as bringing a Divine sanction with it. Good customs which seem to be endangered will find a firmer support than they had before. We shall once more perceive the will of God in what the facts of life bring home to us. The witness of facts, if only we can get

it genuine, is as positive and authentic a revelation of the will of God as anything in the New Testament.

So far, then, as the determining of what we ought to do is concerned, we may be better satisfied that we are walking on Christian as well as solid ground, in going with Mr. Mill or any other of the moralists who make the promotion of human happiness the test of right action, than in depending, with Mr. Lecky, on the guidance of our innate moral consciousness. And, to turn the matter round, the Christian theory of accepting God's will as our law, and finding out by experience what God's will is, provides us with just those means of discovery which utilitarianism professes to supply.

It is not so easy to describe the *sanction*, as the standard, of utilitarian ethics. With the Christian the will of God is the sanction as well as the standard. We hold ourselves bound to do God's will *because* it is his will. Mr. Mill seems to allow that Christians, without giving up their theory of obligation, may be perfect utilitarians by simply accepting the utilitarian test. But he holds—in common with nearly all moralists, on his own side and on the opposite—that duty may be defined without reference to

God; and he undertakes to show that utilitarians can account for and produce the phenomena of conscience and obligation as well as the *à priori* moralists.

In thoroughness and simplicity Christians may surely contend that their theory of obligation is beyond all rivalry. Only let their datum be granted—that there is a God who communicates his will, in whatever way, to men, his children—and no one can deny that we have in this fact a simple and final explanation of conscience and duty. All the language which seems most natural and inevitable about moral obligation fits in readily with this theory. We have but to name the will of God, to imply that it is absolutely binding upon us. When we further consider what we believe about the nature and acts of God, the law of complete self-surrender and dependence—the principle of righteousness by faith—commends itself to us as necessarily involved in that belief. If all the world consisted of believers in the God of the Christians, it would be manifestly futile to attempt to construct any other theory of duty but that according to which men are responsible to their Maker, as to a perfectly wise and just and loving Father.

Both intuitionalists and utilitarians, however, undertake to explain duty without assuming man's relation to God. And the former do it by affirming that there is something in the constitution of man's nature which gives to right action an *à priori* claim and authority over his mind. They make their appeal to the common consciousness. When the received morality says to us, You ought to do this and that, if we ask, Why ought we? intuitionalists answer by asking, Don't you know and feel that you ought? Utilitarians bring against this method the well-known objections, that this is simply turning the popular impressions of the moment into a law, and that these supposed constitutional assumptions cannot stand against analysis. They proceed to analyse. They say that all that they have to deal with is the internal persuasion or bias which we call the sense of duty. This is, in fact, a strong leaning to what is right, and a strong shrinking from what is wrong. They resolve this feeling into the result of many influences. They trace it to hereditary tendencies impressed on the bodily system, to early education, and most generally, to the action of law and social opinion deterring from and punishing what is wrong, and encou-

raging with approbation and rewards what is right. When such influences have been brought steadily to bear upon a human organisation, there results the state of feeling called conscience, or a sense of duty. To nourish the conscientious feeling it is only necessary to strengthen and direct those influences.

The most determined spiritualist can hardly follow, unmoved, these operations of 'victorious analysis' upon the moral sense. But however adequate the explanations, in the hands of an able reasoner, may for a moment appear to be, no one can acquiesce in them as satisfactory except those who have despaired of the spiritual world. The old terminology of morals is continually protesting and rebelling against this theory of the conscience. Explain it as you will, 'I ought' is hardly the proper expression to denote a physiological inference. If we try to frame a language really suited to such conceptions of duty, the very life seems to have gone out of morality. We miss the most powerful spring of conduct, the most intelligible object of appeal, the strongest anchor in a storm of personal temptation. For the promotion of inward virtue, the morality of thoughts and aspirations, we lose the hold upon a higher power,

and have to fall back upon self-culture only. The moral chemist may bring together materials from below which promise to make the living growth of goodness; but, after all, we continue to feel that we cannot dispense with the subtle influence from above which animates, and inspires, and draws the soul upwards.

But we Christians do not now profess to deny all morality in those by whom the Christian sanction is not accepted. We recognise and admire virtue in men who do not practise it because it is the will of God. If we, then, whose explanation of morality is that God speaks to us, and we hear his voice, and confess his authority, are called upon to explain morality in those whose conception of it is a totally different one, we must either avail ourselves of some independent system of morality for them, or show that our system can adapt itself in some way to their case. The latter course seems to me in every way preferable. And in order to justify ourselves we need nothing but one principle of interpretation, a principle which is on all accounts a most important one. We need *to conceive of God in a truly spiritual manner.* That is, we must think of God as mysterious, never more than partially apprehended, speak-

ing in nature, and in human society, as well as in Christ and in the sacred writers. We must think of trust in God and the service of God as not limited to those who accept the definitions of theology.

The narrowest and most formal notions of God and his action are too common amongst Christians; and these are naturally welcome to those who make it their business to account for all things without God. Non-Christians have great excuse for assuming that the will of God is but another name for infallible Scripture, or that God only acts in miracles, or that faith is a curious principle to be understood only by the initiated. But these notions never formed part of the higher Christian theology. It is impossible for a man to be an earnest and intelligent Christian without being raised by his Christianity above them. All the greater Christian theologians have been led inevitably to views which, by comparison, may be called mystical and pantheistic. They have been accustomed to see God in all things, and especially in all order and goodness. It would be impossible to find a more unmystical and common-sense divine than Paley; but even of him Professor Bain remarks, with significant wonder, 'He cannot, it seems,

trust human nature with a single charitable act apart from the intervention of the Deity.' We should not use by preference the word 'intervention;' but assuredly a spiritual theology, whilst ready to acknowledge the charitable acts of any man, would never admit that one of them was done without the Deity. We say, then, that everything to which the idea of duty attaches itself is some aspect or manifestation of God; that a moral law, whencesoever derived, is in fact a law of God; that ideals cherished with reverence are shadows of the Divine perfection; that even devotion to human kind is devotion to the Father in whose image mankind is made. We do not invent these interpretations merely for the sake of contriving an ambitious, but unreal and delusive comprehension; these and similar statements have been expressed from the first in the language of Christian doctrine, and with an eye to Christians only. We preach upon them from texts of Scripture[1] in sermons intended for the edification of believers. So that this method is a perfectly real one to Christians, and we apply

[1] For example: 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' 'Every one that loveth is born of God.' 'When saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? . . . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

it to ourselves far more, and more naturally, than we think of applying it to unbelievers. But it is capable of application to their case as well as to ours. It will follow then, that, according to the Christian view, he who regards Duty as having an indefeasible claim upon him, is really acknowledging the absolute sovereignty of God's will; he who forgets himself to live for his fellows is living for Christ and for God; he who cherishes an ideal of honour and purity and kindness, is paying homage to the Son of man, and striving after the perfection of God. A conscience is a conscience, however it has been produced; and the higher law to which it is in fact sensitive, however it may be named by the owner of the conscience, is necessarily by Christians named the law of God.

Professor Huxley, in that lecture[1] on 'The Physical Basis of Life,' in which he has declared so uncompromising a determination to know nothing but natural phenomena and their laws, seems to reduce the noblest acts of duty to the precise level of the contractile agitation of the protoplasm in the hairs of the stinging-nettle. 'All thought,' he says, 'is but the expression of molecular changes in the physical matter of life.

[1] The *Fortnightly Review*, February 1869.

As surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action.' Most of his readers cannot help feeling depressed by such a prospect, and would at any rate take it to be discouraging to moral appeals and exhortations; but Mr. Huxley himself seems to consider the identity in nature of action and contractility as positively suggesting with peculiar emphasis a moral conclusion. 'Why trouble ourselves,' he asks, 'with anything beyond natural phenomena? We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before he entered it.' The plain duty of each and all of us! Where in the world, we are inclined to ask, does Mr. Huxley find a place for plain duty amongst his molecular changes? Nevertheless, we see that he does acknowledge a plain duty for all and each; and this plain duty he declares to be to strive against misery and ignorance. Well; any man who does that, in the eye of the Christian, is doing God's will; if he is responsible for doing it, he is really responsible to God. Mr.

Huxley is a physiologist, and goes a little aside from his own professional line in making this appeal to our consciences. But when we see the warmth with which such moralists as Mr. Mill, say, or M. Comte, treat moral questions, the enthusiasm with which they desire the improvement of the human race, their indignation against wrong, their reverence for goodness, the profound sense of responsibility they would cultivate in themselves and others, we cannot but say, these men live by faith more than most Christians, and their faith is in—what? In what we, speaking for ourselves, should most certainly name God.

It may make philosophers smile, thus to pronounce them theists and even Christians, whether they will or no. But these considerations are not addressed expressly to them. The object of them is to justify the Christian theory of duty as capable of universal application. Mr. Bain says of Paley: 'The ethical standard with him is the conjoined reference to the will of the Deity, and to utility or human happiness. He is unable to construct a scheme applicable to mankind generally, until they are first converted to a belief in revelation.' From such an objection I desire to clear the doctrine of those who

make the will of God the supreme law. I contend that Christians have no need to add an exoteric to their esoteric morality. The theory taught them by their Master and St. Paul and St. John serves for all the world. It accepts the utilitarian test of the rightness of actions without reserve. It more manifestly embraces, and gives much-needed support to, the whole intuitional morality. It is able and willing to recognise and affiliate the goodness of all good men, whatever they may profess to believe. In utilitarianism there is nothing which there is not in Christianity. What there is in the Christian ethical system beyond and in advance of utilitarianism—how it gives birth to a larger and finer code of duties, how it presents more powerful and inspiring motives, how, by dealing at once with the heart, out of which are the issues of life, it escapes the embarrassment of a system which is primarily a morality of actions, how it invests the human ideal with heavenly radiance, touching the imagination as well as the heart—on these topics it has been beyond my present purpose to dwell. My conclusion is, let not Christians be distrustful of their theology; let them be glad to see it searched and proved by any trial. Marcus Aurelius has said (iii. 13)

—a Christian ought to say it with tenfold meaning and confidence—'The bond which unites the divine and human to one another is such, that neither wilt thou do anything well which pertains to man without at the same time having a reference to things divine; nor the contrary.'

NOTE ON THE MORAL QUALITY OF ACTIONS APART FROM MOTIVES.

It is by no means an easy thing to define *an action.* There is on one side the Scylla of making it mechanical, by shutting out mind and feeling from it; and on the other side the Charybdis of putting too much mind and feeling into it, and so making it include what does not properly belong to it. The question of the relation of a motive to an action is so important that I may be permitted to refer to an incidental discussion of it in a note contained in the second edition of Mr. Mill's 'Utilitarianism.' Mr. Mill says in the text of his work (p. 26): 'Utilitarian moralists have gone beyond almost all others in affirming that *the motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent.* He who saves a fellow-creature from drowning

does what is morally right, whether his motive be duty or the hope of being paid for his trouble; he who betrays the friend that trusts him is guilty of a crime, even if his object be to serve another friend to whom he is under greater obligations.' I had objected to this statement, in a criticism which Mr. Mill does me the honour to notice, that we cannot help taking the motive into account, in estimating the rightness or wrongness of an action; and I had suggested more extreme alternative cases than Mr. Mill's, as that the life of the drowning man was saved in order that he might be tortured alive, and that the friend was betrayed with an eye to his own greater good. Mr. Mill replies, that by a common and venial oversight, I have confounded the very different ideas of motive and intention, the distinction between which utilitarian moralists (and Bentham pre-eminently) have taken great pains to illustrate. In the case of rescue which I have supposed, not only the motive, Mr. Mill says, but the act itself is different. The rescue is only the necessary first step of an act far more atrocious than leaving the man to drown would have been. True: but the same criticism appears to me to apply to Mr. Mill's own illustrations. What Mr. Mill,

in the passage quoted, calls motives, Bentham would rather have called intentions. Intention may regard, says Bentham, either the act or its consequences. The man who hoped to be paid for saving the other from drowning, *intended*, Bentham would have said, to make some money; his *motive* was desire of money, a thing neither good nor bad. The saving of life was right, because saving life is generally conducive to happiness. In the other case, what Mr. Mill calls the man's 'object'—meaning his motive—would also be, more strictly, his 'intention.' To serve his friend is his *intention*, and the betrayal of the other friend's trust is 'a necessary first step of this act;' his *motive* is that variety of benevolence which is called gratitude, —a motive which, according to Bentham, might just as easily prompt a wrong action as a right one. As regards this particular point, then, I venture to think that I have offended against accurate distinction neither more nor less than Mr. Mill himself. The question of importance is, how we are to give an action its full moral quality, when we separate it from the motives and disposition. To Bentham, I believe, this would have been a matter of indifference. To him it is enough to call an action pernicious

without stamping it as wicked. He would have so far differed from Mr. Mill, I imagine, as to persist that in the case I suggested, the man in the mere saving of life was doing what ought to be called right, because generally beneficial, although in the particular case it was a step to a wrong action. Mr. Mill appears to be unwilling to call a bad man's act, done with a bad purpose, a good act. On the other hand, are we willing to say with him that a man who betrays a friend in order to serve another friend, to whom he is under greater obligations, 'is guilty of a crime,' no less than if the act were a wholly selfish one? The act, in the legal or Benthamite view, is a wrong one; it is an act for law to punish. But in pronouncing on the guilt of the doer, in considering the reflex character of the act, we can hardly help taking motives into account. Mr. Mill allows us indeed to do this, if we are estimating the worth of the agent. We may infer, he says, disposition from acts, and shall think well or ill of a man according to his disposition. Well, what I contend is, that this principle of estimating according to motives runs of necessity into our judgment of acts when we are determining their moral quality. Bentham himself says, 'It is an acknowledged thing that every

kind of act whatever is apt to assume a different character, and be attended with different effects, according to the nature of the *motives* which give birth to it.' It is most natural, when we are thinking of moral responsibility, to regard an act as an expression of mind or feeling. And Christians will habitually and consistently so regard it. They will always look beyond the act to its motives. In their view, acts derive their morality from the actuating purpose or feeling. And they will judge of feeling as right and noble, or the opposite, not only by its tendency to produce beneficial results (although they will accept this as a safe criterion), but also as it is in harmony or not with what they have learnt to be the highest attributes of the Divine nature.

WEAK POINTS IN UTILITARIANISM.[1]

OF all moralists not distinctly professing to take the utilitarian side, probably no one has conceded so much to the utilitarian theory as Professor Grote.[2] He distinguishes, indeed, between the older Epicurean doctrine concerning happiness as the object of action, and what he calls the neo-utilitarianism of Mr. J. S. Mill, and it is only to the latter that he is so friendly. He sees in it a philosophy differing much, and even in kind, from that of Bentham and Paley. But this ethical system of Mr. Mill is the utilitarianism which is before the world now, and in which we of this generation are chiefly interested; and Professor Grote, as a philosopher of a different school, has treated it with a generosity which should tell with equally advantageous effects both on utilitarians and on their oppo-

[1] The *Contemporary Review*, August 1870.

[2] *An Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy.* By the late John Grote, B.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Cambridge. Edited by J. B. Mayor, M.A. Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, & Co. 1870.

nents. It is extremely desirable on many accounts that the modern utilitarianism should be understood, and should have thorough justice done to it.

The criticism which Professor Grote brings to bear on Mr. Mill's treatise at many different points is mainly intended to prove that the system expounded by Mr. Mill is *inadequate* as a complete explanation of all the facts which moral science must take into account. All Mr. Mill's positive doctrine, we might say, Professor Grote accepts; and he gives it a high place, allowing it to divide the throne of the ethical kingdom. But he decidedly opposes the claim of utilitarianism, in its improved shape, to be the whole of moral science.

I wish it were possible to commend this work of Mr. Grote to all those who are interested in ethical discussions as a readable book; but unfortunately, with all its merits, it does not possess that of readableness. For this the style is partly to blame, and partly the whole order and method of the work. But it would be hard to blame either the author or the editor. Mr. Mayor has done all that an editor could do in the circumstances in which he was placed. These are fully explained in the Preface. The pleasure which

Professor Grote took in speculating and writing down his thoughts on philosophical questions was balanced by a corresponding dislike of the task of preparing what he wrote for publication. He consequently left a large quantity of essays and chapters in manuscript, in a more or less finished state. A great part of this *Examination* was written when Mr. Mill's papers on Utilitarianism came out in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1861. On the republication of these papers in a separate volume, Mr. Grote sent his criticisms to the press as far as the end of the seventh chapter of this volume; but then he changed his mind about publishing in that form, and the type was broken up. After his lamented death in 1866, Mr. J. B. Mayor, as literary executor, found himself in possession of the printed chapters, with eleven more in manuscript. These latter he has partly rearranged; and he has edited the whole work with affectionate care, giving all possible help to the reader by references, summaries, and occasional notes of explanation. Such being the history of the work, we can hardly either wonder or complain that it exhibits the disadvantages of being written in a *desultory* manner. The arrangement, though not disorderly, is unsystematic whilst the subjects discussed are so liable to be

confused and made hopelessly unintelligible by indistinctness of thought, that we most of us need the helps of formal arrangement and a precise style to preserve us from lapses of discrimination, and from being victimised by besetting fallacies. If the matter of the volume had been digested and packed into half the space—if this criticism of Mr. Mill had not been much more than twice as long as Mr. Mill's treatise—the reading of the book would have been much easier.

No doubt some will also share the feeling which caused Professor Grote himself to give up his first intention of publishing this work—that it is too exclusively *critical* in its scope. It aims at proving that the new utilitarianism is not so well-based and complete a system of life and duty as it professes to be. But we are too familiar with the shortcomings of all human products, systems of speculation amongst the rest. Considering how freely Mr. Grote accepts the utilitarian as a partial theory of morals, the reader will be apt, I think, to get tired of so much trying of its weak places, and will wish to see it harmoniously and securely adjusted in the more comprehensive theory of which it is to form a part. Mr. Grote does not omit to indicate what principles, in his judgment, are needed

to supplement that of the pursuit of happiness, but he deliberately declines to attempt the construction of any system, and prefers to regard human existence as too various and incomprehensible a matter to be brought, at least with our present knowledge, under any simple unity of conception. A little more enthusiasm, a more evident desire to commend some satisfying view to the reader's mind, would have made the book more interesting.

But if we miss the inspiring effects of eagerness and confidence, we feel at once in this work the presence of the most charming modesty and candour. Professor Grote is never carried by controversial warmth into unfairness. He is always courteous and gentle, always anxious to correct dogmatism in himself, as in others, by appeals to the complexity and mysteriousness of the world with which moralists have to deal. And, in the same spirit of reverence for the actual truth of things, he takes pains to be accurate in expression as in thought. His style, though involved and cumbrous, is that of a thinker who realises distinctly what he means, and endeavours to convey his meaning in terms which shall not be liable to be misunderstood.

The following topics may serve as heads for

some of the critical observations in which Mr. Grote seems to me to have touched weak points in the utilitarian creed:—the nature of happiness, the social instinct, the distribution of happiness, the value of action, moral imperativeness.

1. Utilitarians hold, in Mr. Mill's words, 'that actions are right in proportion as they tend to produce happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain: by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.' Professor Grote admits that some kind of happiness is the end of all action, that 'the happiness of whatever can feel happiness is the proper object of all the action which can go on in the universe.' 'I hope I may be able to avoid,' he says, 'in controverting Mr. Mill, any disposition to value less than he does human happiness, or even human pleasure, and the action which is conducive to it. I recognise fully the worth, not only of *his* utilitarianism, but of the older and inferior, as aiding the study, than which nothing can be more important, of the manner in which human happiness may be promoted.'[1] But, he inquires, do we sufficiently know what happi-

[1] P. 32.

ness is, to be able to make general rules about it, and to use it as the one measure of the rightness of actions? Mr. Mill thinks we do. He appeals to common sense and common experience. But when attempts are made to formulate happiness, *either* we have only the more commonplace forms of it represented, *or* we have some *ideal* quality of it introduced, which does not belong to the mere testimony of experience. In describing a happy life, Mr. Mill mentions as 'the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing.' Mr. Grote observes on this prescription for happiness, that it rather has a partial and *moralistic* truth, than is true as a scientific statement. 'I apprehend that with at least an equal degree of truth we might say that it was a great thing for happiness to expect a great deal from life.' 'I can hardly think Nature was wrong in filling us, as she does, especially in earlier days, with hope and unlimited expectation, even though perhaps much of bitter disappointment should follow.' 'The advice of parents to their children is given with the feeling on the part of the parent, that there is sure to be enough in the child of strong passion, hopefulness, enterprise, and other elements of this kind,

which he only fears lest there should be too much of, but the absence of which, though they make no part of his advice, he understands would be quite as great a calamity as disregard of his advice. Mr. Mill's prescription for happiness, not to expect too much from life, is of this character. Considering the exceeding likelihood that we shall form utterly unreasonable expectations, the advice, in this point of view, is most sensible. But if Mr. Mill's view were, not simply to correct and restrain a temper of mind which he knows is sure to exist in spite of all that may be said against it, but to describe the temper which he thinks should be, I would take, for happiness, what seems to me to be the side of nature against him. And so as to Paley: if his description of what will make us happy is intended as a portrait of a happy life, without the supposition of there existing besides a mass of strong emotion, impulse, imagination, and other such elements, of which what he gives is really only a chastening and correction,[1] I must

[1] There is a striking coincidence between this observation of Mr. Grote's and a similar one in a paper to which I shall refer again, on 'The Morals of Expediency and Intuition.' 'All moral controversies may, we think, be reduced under four general heads. First, what is the sphere of morals, what part of human life do they cover, and of what other elements in human nature

say that in my view human life as it exists is not only better but happier than he would make it.'[1] This seems to me an interesting and valuable piece of criticism. Mr. Mill's attempt to base the superiority of the higher class of pleasures upon simple experience is subjected to a keen analysis. 'It is an unquestionable fact,' says Mr. Mill, 'that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties.' To call some faculties 'higher,' Mr. Grote argues, implies of itself that they are worthier to be employed, and is sufficient to determine action. But it might be answered that 'higher' is used *à posteriori*, to describe the faculties of which the employment is found by comparative experience to yield the more pleasure. With more effect he remarks that, in taking the judgment of those who have tried, and are

do they assume the existence? . . . The first, which is of extreme importance, has as yet been hardly touched, though it would probably be found to throw great light upon the other three. We shall confine ourselves to observing upon it that it will be found to involve, amongst other things, the principle that *all ethical systems assume the existence of a flow of passion which is to be artificially checked or quickened by prohibitions or commands*.'—*Pall Mall Gazette*, June 5, 1869.

[1] P. 34.

capable of appreciating, different sorts of pleasures, we are bringing in an element—capability of appreciation—which does not belong to the simple experience of pleasure and pain. We say that we ought to pursue that kind of happiness which is valued by the worthiest. He shows also that pleasure and pain are so little *separable* from the whole state of mind of the enjoying or suffering person, that a man whose existing character disposes him to enjoy one kind of pleasure is not a fair judge of the comparative enjoyability of another kind, although he himself, in a different state of mind, experienced it. 'As a matter of fact we do not look upon pleasures as independent things to be thus compared with each other, but as interwoven with the rest of life, as having their history and their reasons, as involving different kinds of enjoyment in such a manner that our being able to enter into one kind is accompanied with a horror of another kind, which would entirely prevent the comparison of the one with the other as pleasures. Besides this, it must be remembered that, in the interval between the one pleasure and the other, the mind itself is changed: you have no permanent touchstone, no currency to be the medium of the comparison. Supposing a man whose youth has

been grossly vicious, whose mature age is most deeply devout: most commonly I think the man will wonder that he was ever able to find pleasure at all in what he once found pleasure in. Earnestness in the later frame of mind, whatever it is, would only preclude the possibility of a cool comparison of it, as to pleasure, with the earlier one.'[1] 'Pleasure will not bear to be looked too straight at, to be made too much, itself, the object and centre of view.' 'I do not think that any person who considers really what life is, while undoubtedly he acknowledges that comparability among different sorts of pleasure, as pleasure, is to a certain extent real and what we act upon, will ever imagine that it can be to us a moral guide, or a basis for moral philosophy.' 'I cannot understand a general scale of pleasures, in which so many marks will be given to drunkenness, so many to love of the fine arts, so many to something else, according to the experience of those who have tried more than one of them.'[2]

2. But, in Mr. Mill's creed, it is not their tendency to produce happiness simply, but their tendency to produce *social* or *general* happiness, that determines the rightness of actions. The adjective *social*, in Mr. Grote's opinion, really

[1] P. 54. [2] P. 55.

transforms the old happiness theory, instead of merely developing it. He points out something very like a fallacy in Mr. Mill's attempt to found the pursuit of social good on the natural desire of happiness. '"Each person's happiness," says Mr. Mill, "is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons." We are talking here of "a good" as an "end of action:" let us substitute the equivalent term, and the argument then will be, that as each man's happiness is "the end of action" to him, so the general happiness is "the end of action" to the aggregate. Except so far as "the aggregate" can act, this latter clause is unmeaning. But Mr. Mill seems to consider that he has proved that, in the same natural manner in which a man's happiness is an end to him, the aggregate happiness is an end to *each individual* of the aggregate. Mr. Mill in other places, as we have seen, shows most admirably how it may *become* so; but if his proof here had held good, there would have been no need to show this; what I have called his "Societarianism" would have been superfluous.' 'The real point of morals, which Utilitarianism evades, is the knowing how to meet any one who concludes

thus, Since then it is *my* happiness that is the good to *me*, it is *not* the general happiness that is so, and there is no reason that I at least should act for *that*. The more a man's particular happiness appears a good to him, the more it is likely to engross his action, and the *less* he is likely to think of the happiness of the aggregate.'[1]

If happiness, in the bulk, were like a central body towards which human effort naturally gravitated—if it were as natural to me to seek some one else's happiness as my own, simply through the attraction which happiness exercises upon my instincts,—then Mr. Mill's Neo-Utilitarian theory would seem to be well based and consistent. But it is not clear why the simple natural craving of each man for his own happiness, no other element which might determine conduct being imported, should be supposed to bind or to lead each man *to prefer the general happiness to his own*. Mr. Mill emphatically holds such preference to be right. His words can never be too often quoted: 'The happiness which forms the Utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own

[1] Pp. 70, 72.

happiness and that of others, Utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator;' 'it is noble to be capable of resigning entirely one's own portion of happiness or chances of it.' There could not be a higher or more exacting ethical doctrine. But does it quite legitimately spring from the observation that nature teaches every man to seek his own happiness? Mr. Mill brings in, as a fact of experience, the multiform operation of the social instincts: 'The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances, or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body.' No doubt this is a fact, and a fact of experience. Instead of questioning the importance of it, we ask whether it is not *too* important in the Neo-Utilitarian theory for a secondary place; whether the account of virtue and duty given by this theory is not based much more on the bond which unites men in society than on the desire of each man for his own happiness. Men become conscious of relations to their fellows; the binding force of these relations grows with life and civilization; men thus feel themselves con-

strained to *prefer* the social good to their own. Is not the social bond the more important part of the foundation of Mr. Mill's ethics? Has not the Stoical or Christian cuckoo extruded the Epicurean sparrow? The ideal, though you drive it out with a fork, will insist on returning.

3. According to Utilitarianism, tendency to produce happiness is the sole criterion of the morality of an action. Therefore, it may be inferred, a man's actions are to be determined by intention to produce happiness. Professor Grote assumes that the latter proposition is equivalent to the former; and he presses the question, *Whose* happiness? both in other parts of his work, and especially in a chapter on 'the distribution of action for happiness.'

Perhaps, however, it ought not to be assumed that those two propositions are equivalent. Whether a certain kind of action is right or not, is to be settled by its bearing, to be ascertained by experience and observation, upon universal happiness. But when it has been concluded on such grounds that a certain action is right, its rightness is a law, on Utilitarian principles, to the individual agent. He is not bound or expected to have the results of the action consciously in view. I think that the remembrance

of this distinction between the morality of an action and the purpose of the agent will neutralize some part of Mr. Grote's criticism. If a man is asked, 'Why do you care more for your child's happiness than for that of some other human being who has no tie to you?' he may answer, 'Because it is natural and right that I should; and it is right, because experience proves that the peculiar devotion of parents to their children's good is for the general advantage.' At the same time it seems to me open to question whether the Benthamite calculations which Mr. Mill persists in affirming to be the foundations of morals, are really the natural and scientific basis of the superstructure which he rears upon them.

Mr. Mill writes as follows: 'The Greatest-Happiness Principle is a mere form of words without rational signification, unless one person's happiness, supposed equal in degree (with the proper allowance made for kind), is counted for exactly as much as another's. These conditions being supplied, Bentham's dictum, "everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one," might be written under the principle of utility as an explanatory commentary.' Mr. Herbert Spencer had remarked on this dictum,

that 'the principle of utility presupposes the anterior principle, that everybody has an equal right to happiness.' 'It may be more correctly described,' answers Mr. Mill, 'as supposing that equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable, whether felt by the same or by different persons. This, however, is not a *pre*-supposition; not a premise needful to support the principle of utility, but the very principle itself; for what is the principle of utility, if it be not that "happiness" and "desirable" are synonymous terms? If there is any anterior principle implied, it can be no other than this, that the truths of arithmetic are applicable to the valuation of happiness, as of all other measurable quantities.'[1] But is this principle, that equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable, whether felt by the same or by different persons, all that is meant by the dictum, 'everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one'? This dictum sounds like a generous assertion of equal rights; but it has no longer any such attractiveness if it means, for example, this, 'Provided I can more than double my own happiness, I shall do this, rather than try to give only an equal amount to another.' Hypothetical cases, which

[1] P. 93, 2nd Ed.

do not correspond to actual facts, are often misleading; but in dealing with an arithmetical philosophy, arithmetical cases are not illegitimate tests. Suppose then only two persons, say Adam and Eve, alive in the world together. Imagine Adam to be thoroughly possessed by Utilitarian first principles. He would repeat to himself, 'Equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable. Eve's happiness is as valuable as mine; also, mine is as valuable as Eve's. If it is in my power to add rather more to my own happiness than with the same effort I can add to hers, Eve has no claim whatever upon me. A larger amount of happiness is more desirable than a smaller.' But what, in this surely supposable case, becomes of the self-renunciation which Utilitarianism applauds?

Mr. Mill, it has been seen, remarks that the principle 'that everybody has an equal right to happiness may be *more correctly* described as supposing that equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable, whether felt by the same or by different persons.' Yet he himself deliberately uses on the same page the less correct form of expression, '*The equal claim of everybody to happiness*, in the estimation of the moralist and the legislator, involves an equal

claim to all the means of happiness.' Mr. Mill grows warm in the assertion of equal rights, and then he affirms that the great moral duty of treating all equally 'rests on a still deeper foundation, being a direct emanation from the first principle of morals.' This first principle is the arithmetical valuation of amounts of happiness. But in such valuation of happiness, as Mr. Mill himself plainly states, it makes no difference whether the happiness is felt by the same or by different persons. Therefore there is no equal claim of everybody to happiness involved in the mere addition and subtraction of amounts of happiness. Enthusiasm for social justice is not to be derived from the simple arithmetic of happiness, disengaged from every other principle.

Mr. Grote, assuming that in the application of its fundamental principle Utilitarianism would teach a man to aim at giving equal happiness to all, points out the extreme unnaturalness of such impartiality. No one would tolerate such a precept as 'love your father and your neighbour, your benefactor and your neighbour, alike:' 'yet this is in fact what the principle of "everybody counting for one" leads to.'[1] It is difficult to say how far such

[1] P. 95.

criticism touches Mr. Mill. On the one hand, he warns us distinctly that that principle is limited by the inevitable conditions of human life, and by considerations of social expediency; and both life and the common interest constrain a man to love his father more than a stranger. On the other hand, Mr. Mill's creed seems to look upon preferences with disfavour, as tolerated exceptions rather than as growing out of the fundamental idea, as *enclaves* in the territory of the greatest-happiness principle, which must be watched with jealousy. But, if we take Mr. Mill's interpretation of the equality of persons as being properly the equality of equal amounts of happiness, we might invoke this principle in aid, *not* of an unnatural impartiality, but of those preferences which nature so strongly sanctions. For surely a man might argue with himself in this way, 'Placed in the relation in which I am to my wife, I am much more able to give three times a of happiness to her than to give a to three strangers apiece. Therefore my wife has the stronger claim to happiness at my hands.' Most persons, however, would feel that if the primary and derivative principles of Utilitarianism be respectively what Mr. Mill describes, we are better occupied in conversing with such *secon-*

dary principles as Duty and Self-renunciation than in going to the source and assuring ourselves that equal amounts of happiness, whether in the same or in different persons, are equally desirable.

4. The difficulty, in the Utilitarian philosophy, of ascending directly from the fact, known and observed, of the universal desire of happiness, to a satisfying conception of Duty, meets us at every turn. 'All men desire happiness; therefore I ought to try to promote the happiness of all,'—does not seem an inevitable deduction. But we might raise the question, whether trying to promote happiness does really commend itself to us as constituting the whole moral worth of action. Granted, that all right action promotes happiness; as to this, there is no controversy: but has the rightness of action no other element except the tendency and purpose to produce happiness? If desire of happiness is instinctive, there is also a very strong and general instinct which shrinks from contemplating the pursuit of happiness as the highest and most satisfying aim. Mr. Grote appeals frequently to this feeling, and to the experience which supports it. The following passage will illustrate his view: 'To

the philosopher who would make *pleasure* the proper aim of life, the moralist might use the same kind of language as the physician might use in reference to bodily pleasure,—"Pleasure, so far as man is master of it, means simply health: take care of that, and the pleasure will take care of itself: any pleasure expressly sought and indulged in will more or less disturb this, and really be more akin to, and productive of, pain than pleasure." . . . But even to the philosopher who would make mental health and welfare the aim of life, the moralist might speak, as I suppose the best physicians would in regard to the body,—"Care of health is not the whole of life or the entire aim of it: nor is health likely to be the better in the mass of cases for such express exclusive care: it will be best consulted if the body, and each part of it, does its proper work and business." And the work and business of the collective human race, it seems to me, is self-improvement; for the sake of the glory of God, if we take a religious view; for its own sake, if we do not.'[1]

It might seem from the last sentence that Mr. Grote in this passage was thinking of the collective human race as seeking its collective

[1] P. 351.

happiness; but his remarks apply with more exactness to the case of an individual seeking his personal happiness. And Mr. Grote has himself warned us that seeking one's own happiness and seeking other people's are distinct in kind, and that a fallacy may be involved in a *saltus* from one to the other. We may recognise, however, a modified force in his argument, if we transfer it to that other distinct case. According to the Utilitarian, to pursue happiness in the bulk is the essence of morality. Happiness in the bulk, to me, is mine *plus* that of other sentient beings. Now, as regards my pursuit of my own happiness, there is a very general belief, which cannot be said to support the Utilitarian theory, not only that such pursuit cannot assume the character of *virtue* even in a limited degree, but also that I am more likely to be happy if my conduct is guided by other considerations than that of seeking to be happy. To seek the happiness of *others* undoubtedly assumes at once the character of goodness; but it may be questioned whether, in the close relations of life, deliberate intentional effort to promote the happiness of others is the best way to make them effectually happy. I doubt whether it would be agreeable to me to know that the

people about me were uniting their efforts to make me happy. One who stirs up the hope and enthusiasm of others by pointing out to them a worthy end for which they may strive, does more to make them happy, though he may not think at all of their happiness, than if it were his understood labour to add to their several enjoyments. Paradoxical as it is, there is something which the subtler part of human nature shrinks from in the naked and deliberate manufacture of happiness.

Is there not a danger, then, of our sacrificing to a theory a portion of the dignity and higher quality, and even usefulness, of human action, if we determine to attribute to it no other, or no higher, aim than that of the production of pleasure?

5. The difficulty of obtaining an adequate sense for the word 'ought,'—of extracting the imperativeness which we associate with the idea of duty,—out of the elements of the Utilitarian creed, is so obvious and familiar that no hostile critic could fail to insist upon it. Mr. Grote on this point criticises Bentham rather than Mill. In his statement of his own views, Mr. Mill seems willing to restrict Utilitarianism to the assertion of a *criterion* of morality. Any one

who will say, 'I hold an action to be right because, or even if, it promotes the general good, to be wrong because, or if, it is detrimental to the general good,' is with him a Utilitarian, whether he believes or not in any other sanction which binds the individual to what is thus ascertained to be right. 'The feeling of unity with our fellow-creatures' is what Mr. Mill himself appeals to, as giving the sense of obligation. He supposes a man to ask, 'Why am I bound to promote the general happiness? If my own happiness lies in something else, why may I not give that the preference?' And he observes, 'This difficulty will always present itself, until, by the improvement of education, the feeling of unity with our fellow-creatures shall be (what it cannot be doubted that Christ intended it to be) as deeply rooted in our character, and to our own consciousness as completely a part of our nature, as the horror of crime is in an ordinarily well-brought-up young person.'[1] And he adds, on the same page, 'The principle of utility either has, or there is no reason why it might not have, all the sanctions which belong to any other system of morals. Those sanctions are either external or internal. Of the external sanctions it is not necessary to speak at any

length. They are, the hope of favour and the fear of displeasure from our fellow-creatures or from the Ruler of the Universe, along with whatever we may have of sympathy or affection for them, or of love and awe of him, inclining us to do his will independently of selfish consequences. There is evidently no reason why all these motives for observance should not attach themselves to the Utilitarian morality, as completely and as powerfully as to any other.' On this Mr. Grote remarks, 'External sanctions are very slightly alluded to, and are dismissed by Mr. Mill almost with contempt;'[1] and it is not indeed easy to see why Mr. Mill should have thought brevity so specially suitable to the mention of them. But at whatever length they may be spoken of, it is clearly a point of great importance whether we stop short with saying, This and that action will conduce to the general happiness, and happiness is desirable for everybody; or can add, I must do what is for the good of my fellow-creatures, because I am bound to them in one body, or because I am the child of a God who desires the good of all his children.

The particular task undertaken by Mr. Mill was to defend Utilitarianism against the 'intuitive'

[1] P. 138.

moralists; and, with reference to the *sanctions* of right conduct, he aims at showing that a morality inferred from the general good may have as strong supports in internal feeling and conscience as a morality derived from intuitive notions of duty. Mr. Grote is hardly an 'intuitive' moralist, of the school opposed by Mr. Mill: if one were to remark that it is difficult to say *what* he is, that is an impression which he would have been very willing to produce. He is so moderate and hesitating in his own pretensions, whilst making it his chief business to moderate the pretensions of the Utilitarians, that he fails to give emphasis enough to his own convictions. But I gather on the whole from the Chapter on 'Duty and the Utilitarian Sanctions,' that Mr. Grote makes the bindingness of Duty to consist in the claims which others have upon us in virtue of their relations to us. He is nearer to Mr. Mill than he is to the 'intuitive' moralists; but this doctrine of *relations* as imposing duties upon us, differs from Mr. Mill's doctrine that the unity of the human race makes us all responsible for seeking each the happiness of all. Duty, as answering to relations, rests rather, as Mr. Grote observes, on *differences* amongst men than upon their absolute equality.

And it varies in stringency according to the closeness and character of the relations.

This theory of Duty and its sanctions might reasonably have been developed and insisted upon by our author, as having advantages over the scheme by which Duty is built upon the two foundations of the desire of happiness and the social unity of the human race. But Professor Grote had a curious shrinking from anything that might even look like a comprehensive science of morals. He had convinced himself that moral philosophy ought to be lowered from its scientific rank, and to be regarded as a set of sciences grouped in somewhat indeterminate relations together,[1] or as an art, depending on several sciences. He believed that right manner of thought about morals was more wanted than systematic knowledge.[2] 'What I have most dreaded,' he says—and it is interesting to note so rare an apprehension—'has been lest anything that I have said should appear to have a completeness which does not belong to it, and lest I should bar up any ways in which the thought of any interested in these subjects might otherwise tend to expand itself.'[3] He gave his

[1] P. 344. [2] P. 7. [3] Ibid.

admiration and sympathies to Aristotle amongst moralists, and in the large-minded moderation and patient dependence on the observation of life which characterised that 'greatest of philosophers,' he found qualities in which he delighted.

But if the cautious temper of mind, nourished by a sense of the vastness and variety of life, is to be compared with that craving for unity which will not rest without endeavouring to see things in their real connection and subordination, we can hardly hesitate in acknowledging the latter as the more serviceable to the progress of knowledge. In morals, not less than in other departments of human investigation, what we most want is the key to the true order of a number of things with which we are familiar. Which is first, which comes after; which is above, which below; at what point we must place ourselves so as to understand best our own life and that of other men;—these are the interesting questions of ethical study. A tentative order is not mischievous, but helpful. Let thinkers offer their solutions, and let students compare them and verify them as they can.

I cannot understand why moralists who are also Christians, and who have in their creed what professes to be a key to human life and

duty, should not make open and direct *use* of it. But that has not been commonly their custom. The more orthodox amongst moral philosophers make rare and dim allusions to their 'religion' as something which esoterically they add on to their morality, but for the most part they keep it out of sight. Wishing to take 'higher' views of life than the thinkers who appeal to experience, they use a kind of shadow-words to fight their battle with. Instead of God, they put forward a shadow-deity called Conscience; for the invariableness that belongs to the mind and will of God, they imagine an invariableness in the conceptions of men. There is more of reference to the will of God and the teaching of Christ in those publicans the Utilitarians, than in most of the 'intuitive' philosophers.

To Christians, the will of God must be the ultimate rule and authority. But we may look for manifestations of that will in the structure and history of the world of men as much as in answering voices of the inner nature.

We can therefore go with those who appeal to experience, as far as they are willing to go with us. Let us hold with Mr. Mill that all human beings are bound together in a spiritual unity; with Mr. Grote, that they are bound to-

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gether in various and particular relations; with both, that all right action must tend to the good of mankind: in the facts thus admitted we have a solid *positive* basis for duty. These facts, studied and dwelt upon, will define our duties with adequate precision, and will nourish the sentiment of obligation.

But if to these facts there be added the acknowledgment of a Maker of the human race and a Framer of its relations, who desires the health and well-being of his creation; and if it be believed also that the Maker, being so related to human beings that they are capable of entering in some degree into his mind, has given them some knowledge of himself and intends them to know him more truly, as children know their father;—then it is evident at once that the spiritual unity and organisation of the human race receive an explanation and support without which they are always in danger of being regarded as imaginary or assumed. I am not forgetting that there are difficulties in reconciling the belief in a supreme will of perfect goodness with the actual phenomena of the world. But, in the case of Christians, their belief stands in spite of those difficulties. And one of the arguments for their belief is that it supports and

explains the necessary assumptions of every moral system. The will of God enfolds in its reconciling embrace all duty, all progress, all happiness. Additional duties, which are not without 'positive' support in the order and progress of human life, enforce themselves upon those who recognise a Supreme will. But the duties of man to man are not displaced. Every act which can be fairly shown on utilitarian or on positivist principles to be right is invested with new dignity, and receives an accession of the most powerful sanctions.

The most simple and popular of all schemes of utilitarian morality was that of Paley. He assumed that a man must inevitably be moved to action by a consideration of his own happiness, but he held that the prospect of enjoyment or pain in the next world would naturally have a most preponderating influence upon his calculations. According to him, the Supreme Being enforces his will upon men by the promise of reward and the threat of punishment. This system, so different from Mr. Mill's, appeared likely to become obsolete. But it has been revived by a writer of well-known vigour and acuteness, whose speculations on ethics and theology have been chiefly given to the public

without his name in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and in *Fraser's Magazine.* This writer, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of June 5th and 8th, 1869, undertakes to explain 'ought' on rigorous Benthamite or Paleyan principles, and finds in it the meaning, 'will, on certain assumed conditions.' 'He ought not to commit a crime,' for example, means, 'He will not commit it if he pays a natural and reasonable regard to the consequences which will overtake him for doing it.' And the most terrible consequences are those which belong to the next world. It would probably be convenient, and it would fall in with the usual illustrations of a writer whose ethics breathe of the Criminal Court, to leave rewards alone and to speak only of punishments. 'Law,' he says, 'whether of the temporal or of the spiritual power, is nothing but organised and systematic intimidation.' Now there is no doubt that men's action is greatly influenced by fear of punishment. Those who believe in the filial relation of men to a perfect God as giving the most complete explanation of human duty, will recognise the value of intimidation for just such purposes as the writer in question has in view. They have always held that the Law is necessary for the restraint of the unrighteous disposition; although it is not their

doctrine that it is the source of righteousness or goodness.

The will of God:—but how is the will of God to be ascertained? Well, we must certainly take care, as we have been lately warned to do, not to speak of God as if he were a man in the next street. If Mr. Mill or M. Comte can show that anything is right because it promotes the general good, springs from a healthy moral state, is bound up with progress, we may readily accept the same evidence as proving the same thing to be according to the will of God. Let a practice have the strongest imaginable religious sanction, if it can be shown on sufficient evidence to be really and on the whole injurious to the well-being of mankind, it is impossible that we should continue to believe it to be prescribed by the will of God. We think we have other information as to the will of God; but no other can be in the long run more convincing than that supplied by conduciveness to the happiness of mankind.

The old snare of orthodoxy is that of not merely using some particular mode of reading the will of God, but of insisting on that mode as solitary and exclusive in its authority. If we are simply anxious to learn what it may please

the Creator of the universe and Redeemer of mankind to communicate to us, by any of the processes which may be suitable to the modes of his action in the world, we may be able to welcome any contribution to our knowledge which the honest observation of facts may supply. In the physical world, we are learning to admit every well-supported theory of the modes of change and development, as not conflicting with, but illustrating, the action of the Divine Creator. Discoveries which seem to show us *how* things have come about, have no proper tendency to weaken our faith in him who prescribes the way and gives the impulse. So, in the moral world, there is no theory as to the determination of right or wrong, or as to the genesis of conscience, professing to rest on facts, which we who look to the will of God as supreme may not gladly credit with the whole value which the facts seem to impart to it. Suppose it to be shown that moral feelings are transmitted together with physical characteristics from parent to child; suppose it to be shown that social opinion impresses its judgments by the unwearying urgency of threats and punishments with great effect upon the growing nature: why should not these be par-

tial methods of Divine discipline? We observe in the world of mankind a marvellous and intricate order; we see incessant reciprocal influence, curious likenesses and differences, a body composed of individuals who are changed from minute to minute, yet maintaining a homogeneous growth of thought and sentiment which speaks of a common spiritual life: all these phenomena should be full of interest and instruction to us, and we should only rejoice that in the confession of a divine purpose we have a centre of unity for them all, and know how to find an origin, a meaning, and a hope, for what we see or experience. There is neither need nor inducement to make human intuitions the ultimate foundations of our building, when the will of God has been revealed to us by life and history and is illustrated by the whole progressive creation.

NATURE AND PRAYER.[1]

THE prayer appointed for use in our churches with reference to the cattle plague and the cholera appears to have fallen upon a susceptible state of the public mind like a spark upon tinder. It is evident that many thoughtful persons have been much exercised in mind by questions relating to prayer. Not unwilling to pray, they have shrunk from praying blindly. They have wished to feel assured that they could pray reasonably, and without stultifying convictions upon which a main part of their life is built up. Old difficulties and perplexities about prayer have revived, and have assumed what has appeared for the time a more formidable aspect. And whilst these anxieties have been stirring in the minds of the thoughtful, that portion of the religious world which is not troubled by doubts has been disposed to *push* the use of prayer with a certain importunity, and in a spirit of latent, if not professed, anta-

[1] *Macmillan's Magazine*, January, 1866 (the preceding year having been that of the cattle plague).

gonism. There are always people ready to seize with eagerness what they regard as an opportunity 'to rebuke the infidel notions of the day.' Most likely a strong and early pressure was brought to bear upon the Archbishop and the Ministry to induce them to appoint a public prayer against the cattle plague. 'What are the clergy and the authorities doing,' I was asked, 'that we have no prayer issued for deliverance from the cattle plague?' I expressed a doubt whether the calamity had reached a magnitude which called for so special an act. 'Oh, but,' the answer was, 'it is so important to take these things in time!' The appointment of a prayer which was to be looked to as a kind of mechanical prophylactic did not seem to me a thing much to be desired; and probably a similar distaste was similarly excited in others. When the prayer came, it certainly was not peculiarly felicitous, but it was not unlike other prayers of the same kind. It was welcome, I fully believe, to a large number of pious persons, who had been very much alarmed by the reports of the disease, and who thought it right that we should publicly deprecate the terrible visitation which had begun to afflict us. But, on the other hand, it excited an almost angry outburst of protest and criticism. Fault

was found with details of the prayer, in a tone which showed plainly that those who found it disliked the whole before they quarrelled with the parts. Then followed reflection and questioning. 'If this prayer is wrong, what kind of prayer is right?' Objections have been gravely and even reverentially raised; attempts have been made to meet those objections. Laymen have come forward to say that, while they felt that some ordinary kinds of prayer could not be defended in the face of science, and must be abandoned, they yet could not consent to give up prayer altogether. Reasons have been given for discriminating between one kind of prayer and another; and it has also been seen, as is common in similar cases, that those who have given up certain beliefs in deference to argument, think they have thereby purchased a right to live unmolested by argument in what they retain.

Everyone is aware of the ground upon which prayer is commonly objected to at the present time. The *uniformity of nature*, it is said, makes it impossible that any prayers having for their object a variation in the course of nature should be effectual. The laws of nature, according to all true observation, are constant.

There is no greater or less in the matter. To ask that a single drop of rain may fall, is as contradictory to science as to ask that the law of gravitation may be suspended. Prayer, therefore, having reference to anything which comes within the domain of natural laws, is forbidden by modern science.

It would be the rashness of mere ignorance and folly to enter the lists against science, or against that principle of the uniformity of nature which is at once the foundation and the crowning discovery of science. Science has been so victorious of late years, and has been adding so constantly to the strength of its main positions, that it is scarcely safe to doubt anything which is affirmed by cautious scientific men as a fact within their own domain. But when, from the proper and recognised conclusions of science, inferences are drawn which affect the spiritual life, and threaten destruction to what we have been accustomed to regard as most precious, it cannot be complained of if we scrutinise those inferences carefully. If there is a region of genuine mystery, into which the science of phenomena is pushing forward its methods too confidently, it may be forced to retire, not indeed by spiritual intimidation,

but by the opposition of realities to which it is self-compelled to pay respect.

Now the affirmation of the uniformity of nature, when pressed *logically* against the utility of prayer, seems to me either to prove too much or to prove nothing. We may be permitted to ask this question, Does *the constancy of the laws of nature* imply that *the course of nature is absolutely fixed*, or not?

It is surely conceivable that the negative answer might be given to this question. For the experience of every hour, of every minute, seems to show, that the actual *course* of nature may be altered without the slightest interference with any law of nature. Shall I blow out the candle before me, or not? It seems to me that I may do it, or refrain from doing it, as I please. In either case, no law of nature is violated. In either case, interminable consequences follow my choice. The whole course of nature will be different if I do it from what it would be if I did not do it. The voyage of discovery of Christopher Columbus was at one time apparently within the domain of human choice. He might *not* have sailed; he *did* sail; and what prodigious results have followed, in the ordinary course of nature, as we say, from

his enterprise! If this variableness of the course of nature be admitted, it is clear that the constancy of natural laws interposes no obstacle to an efficacy of prayer without limit. There may be other reasons why human prayer should not avail to change the course of nature, but the absolute inviolability of law will not be a reason. For, in the first place, prayer may be conceived as taking effect *through human wills.* In a vast proportion of cases, the objects for which we have prayed might be accomplished through human agency. The cattle plague might be neutralized by the discovery of a remedy, by the adoption of hitherto neglected sanitary precautions, and by other means which ingenuity might imagine as operating through the minds of men. If any persons have a conviction that our praying could not lead to any quickening of human intelligence, or to any invigoration of human effort, they would hardly express that conviction by saying that the laws of external nature are too constant to allow it. With regard to all that may be done through human volition, the existence of fixed laws of nature is manifestly no hindrance to its being done.

The interference of mind and will with the

course of nature is no doubt more intelligible to us as taking place through human action, than if we transcend human action. But we are now speaking of possibility, in a strict logical sense. And, although we are entirely ignorant *how* the Creator can change the course of nature otherwise than through man, it seems clearly unreasonable to affirm that such other interference is impossible, because we know nothing about it. If there are invisible beings in the universe, why should they not have some power of acting upon the course of nature? So far as analogy is any guide, the fact that we, by our volition, can alter the course of things without violating laws, would suggest a presumption that the same thing can be done in other ways of which science simply knows nothing, and about which imagination cannot with much advantage exercise its power of conjecture. It is conceivable therefore that prayer relating to definite physical ends *might be* answered, without the appearance of the slightest departure from the ordinary course of nature.

If, then, the constancy of natural laws be so interpreted as to admit of indefinite variations, through free volition, of the course of nature, that constancy proves nothing against prayer.

If, however, it be interpreted to mean that by the operation of cause and effect the course of nature is so fixed that no change in accordance with human thought or desire can possibly take place in it, the argument proves too much. If the tremendous doctrine of necessity be called in at all, it is unscientific to apply it partially. If in the face of a fixed and necessary course of things prayer becomes an absurdity, how much else becomes absurd also! Everything properly human ceases to be rational, till we are reduced to a dead fatalism. If a philosopher says to me, 'How can you think that by your prayers you can divert universal nature from its pre-ordained course?' I think I reply rationally by asking, 'How can I suppose that by any *acts* of mine, any more than by any prayers, I can alter the unalterable?' If the assertion, 'It is of no use to *pray* against the cattle-disease or the cholera,' be based upon the fact that effect follows cause with unvarying uniformity, the same reason would lead us on to the further assertion, 'It is of no use to *do* anything against the cattle-disease or the cholera.'

Let us consider what will have to be given up, if prayer for physical benefits be condemned on the ground of the uniformity of nature.

Prayer for spiritual blessings can hardly be retained. Are not spiritual things mixed up inextricably with physical? Spirit acts upon outward things; outward things act upon the spirit. Fever is raging in a swampy district. The owner, feeling it to be his duty to try to get rid of this plague, and learning that he might probably do so by draining his land, cuts a drain. The place becomes wholesome. Then the moral tone of the population also rises. The children become brighter, more intelligent, more moral. A great spiritual gain is secured, by the enlightenment of one man acting through a physical improvement. Can it be said that visible things are subject to law, spiritual things to no law? Neither the philosopher nor the Christian could acquiesce for a moment in such a distinction. If, then, a mother is forbidden, by reason, to pray for the restoration to health of her child, can she reasonably pray that he may grow up wise and virtuous? Again, thanksgiving appears to be correlative to prayer. If we are to regard everything that happens as fixed by a predetermined order, we shall be bound to repress all special promptings to gratitude. There may remain perhaps a certain sense of admiration of the course of things as a whole—

modified, one would expect, by a good deal of dissatisfaction—but what we commonly mean by thanksgiving must disappear. Again, deliberate effort to accomplish any end is stultified. If a man were betrayed into such effort by the singular instinct which haunts us, the recollection of the true philosophy would make him smile at himself as a fool. And lastly, he would learn to be ashamed of desire and hope. Only those who have not been taught the unalterableness of the course of things can be weak enough to indulge a wish or a hope concerning the future. What will be will be: and there is an end of it. Motives, aims, hopes, may be included as blind instincts in the great scheme, but they cannot be properly rational; they cannot justify themselves to the enlightened understanding. They must share the fate of prayer. They are instinctive—so is prayer. Prayer is not rational—no more are they.

It would seem, then, that the unalterableness of nature, if it is allowed to condemn prayer, must go on to extinguish everything that we call human. And this argument, if it is sound, would no doubt be generally accepted as a *reductio ad absurdum*, conclusive for refutation. A *reductio ad absurdum*, however, is always more annoying to an opponent, than really satisfying or instruc-

tive. It ought hardly to be used except where strict logic is professed on the other side. That is so in the present case. And we might desire to meet as summarily as possible an assumption which holds up to contempt a large part of all the utterances which human souls in their earnestness and their anguish have offered up, and still offer up, at that Throne of Grace before which they have been invited to prostrate themselves. But the most important bearing of this argument is that it leads us to lay stress upon the affinity between *Prayer* and rational *Desire.*

'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed.' All Christians have been ready to accept this as a principle of devotion. But may we not find, in the definition that prayer is desire looking upwards, a useful guide as to the conditions of reasonable prayer? If desire, by looking upwards, becomes prayer, then we have a real basis for prayer before we come to consider its efficacy. We have it even before we have provided ourselves with any solution of the mystery of God's providence. What we do require, as an antecedent condition of prayer, is the confession of a living God, whose creatures we are, and in whose presence we stand. Then the simple affection of desire for this or that, by

being the affection of a man who remembers God, and knows his relation of dependence and subjection to God, grows into a prayer. A man who desires, in his true consciousness as a creature and child of God, also prays. Supposing this ideal condition to be realized, whatever modifies the desire will modify the prayer; and whatever modifies the prayer will modify the desire.

This view of the nature of prayer would have two important negative effects:—1. It shuts out the use of prayer as a kind of spiritual machinery. The plausible representations of what has been gained by praying, which are often made use of to stimulate the devotions of religious persons, have a tendency to become thoroughly offensive to a reverent mind. We cannot pray rightly, if we resort to prayer simply as an expedient for obtaining what we want. 2. It protests against the divorce of prayer from exertion. Instead of being a substitute for effort, or a supplement to it, prayer is seen to be a kind of natural breath of effort. And the man whose energies are most simply roused in pursuit of any object, will be the man to pray most earnestly.

But how does this view, that prayer is the

Godward aspect of desire, bear upon the question, What boons may we reasonably ask for from God? It suggests, I think, the following principles.

1. We cannot reasonably either desire or ask for anything, except subordinately to the greater desire that God's will, and not ours, may be done. We are sometimes afraid, I suspect, that the full statement of this principle may damp the ardour of prayer. We apprehend the easy objection, 'What is the sense of asking God to do his own will?' But let us bear in mind that the same principle applies to wishing. Can I deliberately desire that God should give up his will for mine? Suppose I earnestly desire,—say that my church should be crowded by reverent and teachable hearers. And suppose a Divine voice to ask, 'Do you wish this, whether it be in accordance with my will or not?' How monstrous and shocking an idea it would be that I could wish it apart from its being God's will! There is no difference, then, in this respect between praying and wishing. Eager importúnate entreaties and desires will no doubt be checked by the habitual consciousness of the perfection and power of the Divine will. So far as reasoning goes, we might probably expect

that such a consciousness would tend to the extinction of desire and prayer altogether. But experience seems to prove that a constant remembrance and worship of God's will does *not* quench desire, but rather keeps it alive. Whatever be the effect of it, we must take the consequences without reservation. If we can only say other prayers heartily on condition of *not* saying always, 'Thy will be done,' we must keep to this prayer and give up the rest. On this point no doubt or compromise can be admissible.

2. A second principle will be, that we should yield without resistance to the instinct of *modesty* in making particular requests. It is here that our increased knowledge of the laws of nature and the interdependence of all phenomena should tell upon us. Occurrences which primitive ignorance never dreamed of as being other than partial and limited, are known to us as having the widest bearings and connexions. To wish that this or that phenomenon should occur to suit our convenience, when we know that it must have other and far more important consequences than those which concern us, would seem ridiculously arrogant. We ought not to shut our eyes to the influence which this con-

sideration may exert upon the character of our prayers. That influence will vary with the knowledge and with the habit of mind of different persons, and is sure to be increasingly great. But, whilst our prayers go hand in hand with our wishes, I think we need not fear for our prayers. We must be content to trust our human nature in the hands of its Maker. If it be his will that we should arrive at a state in which desires for particular things will have become extinct, it is not for us to try to arrest our progress towards that state. But, on this point, it would be rash to speak confidently as to the future. At the present time I imagine it cannot be doubted that cultivated minds, and especially those which are familiar with the study of the complicated and orderly processes of nature, instinctively shrink from allowing themselves deliberate desires for external occurrences, which are not within the apparent scope of human effort. There is indeed a less scrupulous kind of feeling somewhat different from desire, of which the natural expression is, 'I should be glad if such or such a thing were to happen.' Of this I am not speaking as being co-ordinate with prayer, but of that which would lead a man to say, 'I long for this or that to come to pass.' A philo-

sopher's desires of this nature (though I believe he will not be without them), will certainly be different from a child's; and it seems reasonable to apply to the growth thus to be observed the words of St. Paul, 'When I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.'

3. Besides this growth in what I have called *modesty*—the philosopher's modesty in the presence of the outward world—there is another kind of growth, more properly belonging to the Christian, which will tend towards the same result: I mean the increasing *spirituality* which should characterise our desires and our prayers. Every one would concur in the statement, that as a Christian advances in godliness, his mind will be set less on outward things, and more on the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. In all records of the aspirations of devout men, we observe that their genuine longings have been spiritual, and that physical good things have seemed hardly worthy of their prayers. And this answers to the teaching of our Lord—as in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' and 'If ye, being evil, give good gifts unto your

children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give *the Holy Spirit* to them that ask him ?'

It is not enough to say that the spiritual Christian will not pray earnestly for temporal good things *for himself*, but will think more of being enlightened, purified, and brought into fellowship with God. His feeling will be similar when he thinks of those in whom he is interested. For them, also, he will not be careful to ask physical blessings; he will most earnestly desire their spiritual good. Nor will the case be different when it is a community—a Church or a nation—which prays, and not an individual. In proportion as we know what is best, and understand the dependence of inferior blessings upon the higher gifts of spiritual life, we shall pray that light may be given us, and righteousness, and mutual harmony, and self-control, and power to aid other nations and Churches, more earnestly and with more satisfaction than we shall pray for an abundant harvest or for a new development of trade.

It doubtless has occurred to the recollection of the reader that, in thus exalting spiritual objects as the proper objects of our prayers, we are but following the example which our Saviour ex-

pressly gave us to follow. When we say the Prayer which he taught us, we ask the Heavenly Father of all to cause his name to be hallowed, his kingdom to come, and his will to be done, before we speak of ourselves at all; and then only pray that our daily bread may be given us —this bread itself including unquestionably spiritual food—and pass on to petitions for forgiveness and for deliverance from the dominion of the evil one.

If our prayers be in their nature strictly co-ordinate with our desires, and if both our prayers and our desires should be governed by these principles—that in all we wish for or ask we should be careful (1) to cherish a willing submission to the Divine will, (2) to bear in mind our own insignificance in relation to the natural order, and (3) to lift up our aspirations to spiritual objects, it will assuredly follow that petitions for physical objects of desire will become less and less acceptable to us, and will tend to disappear from our habitual prayers. Our feeling about them will probably be that they belong to an early stage of spiritual and intellectual growth, in which they are natural and wholesome; but that they are scarcely suitable to adult age. But we shall continue to

pay deference to instincts and necessities of nature; and, when the pressure of suffering and alarm extorts a longing and an appeal, we shall not pronounce in the name of either reason or religion that the appeal shall not take form in words of prayer addressed to the Father or the Saviour. If we are to cry out at all, it is in every way best that we should cry to God. An earthly parent might desire that the wishes and requests of his little child should gradually be disciplined by knowledge; but he would not repulse the child, and bid him carry elsewhere than to *him* his childish petitions. Unless our relation to God in heaven be altogether a fiction and a delusion, it is impossible that he should not desire that our deepest feelings should be turned in trust towards him. And, to those who contend that the laws of nature make such appeals unreasonable, we have a right to say, 'You who tell a mother that it is useless for her to pray for the recovery of her sick child, tell her also that the longing she cannot suppress is an illogical anomaly: you who say that a nation, in the agony of a struggle, should not ask God to bless its arms, say also that all the yearning sentiment which is roused into life by the struggle is futile and irrational.'

It is right to state plainly the conclusion, from which some perhaps might shrink, but which seems to follow from the above considerations, that the *forms* which prayer may take, as they must be unimportant in the eyes of God, are also comparatively of little importance for *us*. The *spirit* of prayer is that which is really acceptable to God, and therefore really efficacious. That spirit may find expression only in unspoken groanings. It may address petitions to God as unreasonably as when a child asks for the moon. 'We know not what we should pray for as we ought.' But the prayer will be weighed and estimated, not by its form, but by its essence. There is some danger, let it be admitted, in what may be called the laxity of such a view concerning the utterances of prayer. But we cannot avoid danger, though we may in some degree guard against it. And, in the deeper matters of faith and worship, the true view generally seems to be that which is not unreasonably suspected of being dangerous.

And, though it is right to speak decidedly of the *comparative* unimportance of forms of prayer, it does not by any means follow that they are entirely unimportant; still less that we can dispense with them. It should be regarded as a

solemn duty—and it is one which easily commends itself to the conscience and the judgment —to throw the spirit of supplication into the most rational forms which our knowledge enables us to create. It is surely a mistake to force ourselves to pray for things which do not impress us as fit objects of deliberate desire. Liberty in this respect should be allowed to individual consciences; and at the same time it might be hoped that tolerance, a reverent tolerance unmixed with contempt, should be shown by more cultivated and philosophical minds towards the humbler prayers of the more ignorant.

For they who recognise in any degree the nature and relation of man as a son of God can scarcely fail to admit, that it is well for a man to bring *all* his thoughts, whatever they are, into the presence of his unseen Father. It is better, a thousand times better, that he should put the most foolish and irrational desires into prayer, than that he should throw himself into the same desires without remembering God. Not that no praying can be bad. Prayer may be bad, it can hardly be good, when it is addressed to a capricious being, to a tyrant who may be coaxed or soothed or bribed, in order to obtain some

private advantage. And there is room for earnest thought and endeavour in the effort to keep the image of the Fatherly will of God pure and clear before the mind. But, if it be remembered who and what God is, then, I think, it may be said without limit, it is good for a man to bring all his desires to God and to turn them into prayers, that God himself may teach him what desires are worthy of a child of his, and from what he needs to be purged.

After all, I may seem to have evaded the question as to the *efficacy* of prayer. Can we expect that God will do what we ask any the more for our asking? Are we ready to bring this question to the practical test of experiment? I confess to a shrinking from such an inquiry, as from one which it is neither reverent nor useful to prosecute. But that this feeling may not be reasonably attributed to the consciousness of a bad case, we are bound to try to justify it. Let due consideration, then, be given to the fact, that prayer, when it comes to be regarded as *efficacious*—that is, as a machinery for securing results—is beginning to pass into a hurtful and irreverent superstition. No doubt we here confront a paradox. We are taught to believe in the efficacy of prayer; we may be satisfied that

prayers have brought down definite blessings from heaven; but the moment we begin to act in a business like manner upon a theory of the efficacy of prayer, we cease to pray acceptably. This, let it be borne in mind, is not a mere makeshift of an argument, introduced to cover a weak point; it is a first principle in the doctrine of prayer. If, therefore, specific fulfilments were fixedly or even abundantly assigned to human prayers, a great evil would almost inevitably be created. Prayer would cease to be, in the deepest and truest sense, the prayer of faith, and would become the prayer of calculation; and the spirit of it would evaporate. I should be sorry to say that no good is done by appeals to instances of prayers answered by direct gifts; we have some such appeals in Scripture. But I think a reverent mind must experience some shock to its delicacy from a contact with such appeals; I can almost imagine that it would rather hear nothing of such answers. It scarcely raises our idea of the character of God, to be told that he has caused some little thing to come to pass just because So-and-so asked him. What we want to feel assured of is, that God *hears* our prayers; that if we pour out our hearts before him in childlike hope, he is pleased, and helps

forward the cause into which we have thrown our sympathies. In this way, we may thankfully believe that our prayers are always efficacious. And, inasmuch as very little matters enter into the scheme of God's Providence, and are to be deemed worthy of the Infinite Being because he *is* infinite, we way also venture to take comfort from any incidents which come to us like signs that God has heard us, and to read answers to our prayers in the most ordinary occurrences of life.

THE CONTINUITY OF CREATION.

WE are led not unfrequently in these days to ask ourselves, what our true attitude is towards God *as the Creator*. 'In what sense is God, to us, *the Maker* of all the wonderful things we see around us?'

There used to be a mode of regarding the Creation,—a mode which has in some way been made familiar to us all,—which may best be characterised by a comparison which has commonly served to illustrate it. The world was compared to *a watch*. In the works of a watch we see manifest evidences of design and skill, which warrant us in inferring from the watch a *watch-maker*. So, it was said, with the world. When we look around us, we see in Nature what we recognise as evidences of design. We see adaptations and harmonies, resulting from an established system of laws, and producing results such as we may most reasonably suppose to have been *intended*. From the mechanism of the world

we infer a *World-maker*. . . . This was an interesting mode of regarding the Creation, easily grasped by the understanding and the imagination. But it has the effect of placing the Creator almost exclusively *at the beginning* of the world. The conception of the world as a piece of mechanism implied that it came into existence *at its best*, and that it has been going on just as it was first put together. When the superficial idea of miracles was adjusted to this conception, the Creator was represented as *interfering* at certain times with the natural course of things, suspending for the occasion the laws which he had established. God was thus associated with the world in two ways,—as originally producing it, and as subsequently modifying at his will its natural order.

From the point of view of piety or theology, this view of God the Creator may be seen to have the fault of *separating God too much from the present life of the world.* It gives excuse to the mind for thinking of the world as going on without God *now*, although it could not have been originally produced without him. When we consider the utterances in which inspired men of former times praised God the Creator, we find that they were always full of the thought that

God is abidingly in the world. To them the world was not the mechanical result of an ancient creative act, but was at every moment alive with the life of God. Difficult as it is for anyone to *explain* this relation of the world to God, it will be felt that there is more to stimulate and nourish admiring worship, in the idea of a world which lives and moves and has its being in God, than in the idea of the world as the product of an Almighty Artificer.

Now the irresistible tendency of all recent scientific inquiry has been to exhibit the world *as a growing world.* It no longer appears to any instructed person as *a machine,* but as a thing instinct with life and with the power of self-development. It would not be compared any longer to a watch, but rather to a plant, or an animal organism. Every science, one might say, in its turn, shows how that which is more complex has grown and is growing out of that which is more simple.

The faith of the Christian in a Divine Creator, accepting this account of the world, will look for the action of the Creator in *the energy* which never ceases to push forward, and in *the conscious purpose* which guides, this gradual development. And the faith which makes *these* the objects of

its contemplation will find itself enriched, I believe, with ever-increasing wonder and hope.

Let me dwell a little on the process and on the reward which I have thus indicated.

I say that when we are looking in earnest upon the world with the eyes of modern knowledge, we perceive unmistakeable signs of *growth*. That which *is* has grown out of that which *was*. Turning our glance backwards, and letting the imagination travel farther in the line plainly marked by observation and research, we come to a world unformed and void. The beginning of all things remains as little understood, as incomprehensible, as ever. When we try to reach that, we come to a stop, not only in our knowledge, but in our very faculty of conception. We may go on and on in thought, apparently nearer to the beginning, but, wherever we pause, we find that we cannot help thinking of some existence having *preceded* that earliest or minutest origin which we have striven to conceive. Practically, we can only reach far enough back to discern with probability a world which may be described as unformed and void.

It has been by a close observation of changes now going on that the explorers of science have themselves seen, and have taught others to see,

this *growth* of the world. So far as the heavenly bodies are concerned,—the sun and moon and stars, and the earth itself as a heavenly body;—their scale is so vast, and their rate of change so slow, that observation of their changes, though it has ascertained them to be real, cannot be said to have revealed or even suggested much as to the past development of their system. The contemplation of the heavens would not have sufficed to breed in men's minds the idea of a universal development. The heavenly bodies suggest eternal immutability rather than growth. But it is otherwise with this earth on which we are placed. By piercing and sifting its crust, men have discovered readable records of ancient stages of the earth's history. We possess the remains of life, vegetable and animal, in these successive stages. The coal, upon which we are now keenly feeling our dependence, was stored for us out of the closely packed vegetation of the forests of a pre-historic time. As we go back, we observe by degrees less of form, less of organisation, less of life. And we can reproduce to ourselves with increasing distinctness and certainty the mode in which one stage passed slowly into another, by observing how this same crust of earth is being modified now. Water, frost, fire,—these are the

great modifying agencies by means of which development takes place on the earth's surface. Observers have noticed how the ancient rocks are disintegrated by frost, which cracks and loosens and crumbles them, always thus busy at the work of peeling the tops and sides of the great mountains; how the water of the ocean is evaporated into clouds which partly discharge themselves fruitlessly into the sea again, but partly falling on the land, and chiefly on the higher lands, in rain and snow, have the task of sweeping these mountain sides,— condensing themselves into the

> '. . . . streams which, swift or slow,
> Draw down æonian hills, and sow
> The dust of continents to be;'

how the rivers ultimately deposit by overflow, or in their deltas, or at the bottom of the sea, the soil which the streamlets or the glaciers have brought them from the rocks; how the sea is incessantly occupied in gnawing at the base of the cliffs which stand against it like ramparts, and thus helps the world-wide process of the conversion of barren stone into fruitful soil; how the mysterious subterranean fires, sometimes with violence, sometimes imperceptibly, lift broad spaces with their water-borne sediment out of

the sea, thus giving back again to the land what had been taken from it; how the little coral insect has the skill to build up islands with the solids it extracts from the liquid waters; and how by such agencies the earth is clothed with verdure, and rendered capable of sustaining more and other animal life, and fitted for the needs of successive generations of men. Natural philosophers tell us that, with the forces which they know as operating now upon the earth's surface, and the laws or modes according to which these forces now work, they can account with tolerable decision for the various changes which the strata of geology show the earth to have undergone, from the time when the primary rocks began to give nourishment to the earliest living organisms. The differences between the various stages of the earth's condition are indeed very great; but the lengths of time during which the processes have been going on are by universal agreement immeasurably vast, and in each period the subject-matter with which the natural forces have dealt,—the surface of the earth,—is in the new and changed condition to which previous development has brought it. The progress of one period makes possible a higher progress in the next.

That there has been a continual *improvement* in the general condition of our globe, that the growth has been, not merely a gradual passing from one stage into another, but a regular ascent to a *higher* stage,—no one with the evidence before him would think of denying. Before man's period, the progress did not depend upon any conscious effort of the living creatures on the earth. The growth was what in that sense we might call spontaneous. The soil improved, the living creatures advanced in degree. Higher kinds of life, that is, with more complexity and variety, came into existence, and found the earth suitable to them. All this we read, written with the clearness of daylight, upon the record of the rocks. Since man has been upon the earth, a marvellous new feature has shown itself in the earth's history. It has been man's business to *subdue* the earth as well as to replenish it. The old forces remain, and the old laws; but man, with knowledge and will, *cultivates* the earth. Thus an entirely new *factor* has come into play. No other living creature has made tools for use; no other has cleared the ground, or planted or sown it. The question of human progress in general is beset by some perplexing difficulties; but as regards the extent and the

arts of *cultivation*, we may look back upon undisputed evidence of continual progress. Man's works, in clearing, draining, levelling, manufacturing, leave unmistakeable marks upon the earth. The earth has been made capable of supporting more life, and life of a more varied and complex kind.

It is evident, then, that with regard to what we chiefly mean when we speak of the Creator, we are *in a growing world.* Development has taken place from the rudest and barest beginnings. It is now going on with accelerated speed, and there is every reason to believe that it will continue to advance. It is in connection with this movement of growth and evolution that we must think of the action of the Divine Creator. We may define creation, if we please, as the bringing of *something* out of *nothing*; but if this is all we understand by it, it represents an act which we are incapable of conceiving, and which lies wholly out of the sphere of our living interests. The Creator who comes near to us, whom we are constrained to admire and to worship, is he who causes the world to march, who sustains its order, in whose mind are its various types of life, who with foresight and purpose brings the higher out of the lower.

The true Creation, to us,—the interesting manifestation of creative energy,—is to be seen in the gradual development of the world.

Our faith as Christians, it should never be forgotten, is in the Heavenly Father whom we know through his Son Jesus Christ. We surrender ourselves to the Righteousness and Love which seek us and claim us in Christ. It is infinitely more important to us to confess the Divine Supremacy of Righteousness and Love than to have any belief with regard to the natural world. Our first and essential worship is given to *the Father*. But we rejoice to acknowledge in the Righteous Father the Maker and Ruler of the world. It is our interest to trace in every province with which we are concerned the signs that the Righteous Father is working in it. We cannot believe in mere Chance; we will not believe in any other Maker than him who sent his Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Lord. Of him Order, wherever we may see it, speaks to us; for the Righteousness, which is Order in the highest sphere, has naturally for its ally or representative, Order in every lower sphere.[1] We rejoice to see the

[1] 'Righteousness, order, conduct, is for Israel the essence of *The Eternal*, and the source of all man's happiness; and it is

upward tendency of Nature, the manner in which what we simply and rightly call Evil is made to minister to Good, the *Promise* with which Nature, understood most scientifically, speaks to the soul. We do not allow Nature to make our God for us; but we recognise in the humbler sphere of Nature, or the visible world, true rays of that spiritual glory which is to us supremely Divine.

I referred at the beginning of this paper to those adjustments, of organ to useful function, of life to circumstances, in which deliberate Design has been traced, and which have therefore been made proofs of a Divine Artificer. Of such adaptations, of which no one, least of all any scientific man, denies the wonderfulness and the beauty, it may be said that they are involved by necessity in any principle of development. Let the natural action of the physical forces go on, and let there be vegetable and animal life striving upwards, and it will follow as a matter of course that the organs of each variety of life will be in exact adjustment with the circum-

only as a further and natural working of this essence that he conceives creation.' 'He viewed all order as depending on the supreme order of righteousness, and all the fulness and beauty of the world as a boon added to that holder of the greatest of all boons already, the righteous.'—Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, pp. 34, 321.

stances in the midst of which it exists. Life, and the conditions of life, will be inevitably in agreement. You need no other explanation of this agreement than the energy of Life, and the physical phenomena environing it, taken together. That is true. It is not to be denied that the idea of *growth*, upon which I have been dwelling, supplies an explanation, which might perhaps be made to include all cases, of that wonderful adaptation which was formerly attributed to a special ingenuity of the Divine wisdom. But the wonder and the beauty of these harmonies remain. We do not want to use them for syllogistic proofs. They are to us, developed as they have been, works of the Creator, products of the Divine energy in Nature, examples of the wonderful Order which God is ever working out in the world. As such they impress us, and win our admiration, and deepen our reverence. The faith that God is at every moment the author of what *is*, accepts these wonders, with all their impressiveness, as setting forth, each in its small but genuine way, the Divine wisdom. We may entirely believe that it is *natural* for the organs of Life, and the conditions of Life, to correspond with the utmost exactitude; and then we may be checked, it is

true, from speaking of that correspondence as if it were artificial; but it will not be the less Divine for being natural, nor will it affect us less by whatever authority it rightly has as a witness of the Divine glory.

The growth and development of *a human being* are what we call natural. When a man is fully developed, he is so in consequence of the mutual action of the mysterious human life and the whole physical element with which he is environed. But are we therefore to be debarred from yielding to the resistless instinct which impels us to recognise a full-grown human being as a wonderful work of God? Here is the thing; and the more thoroughly we understand it, the more wonderful it seems to us. It is a wonderful work of God, revealing to us something of the Creator's mind. Think not only of the physical form of a man, but of his moral being, of his affections, will, and conscience. These qualities are human, developed, inherited, what you will. Yes, but here they are. We are taught that God is the Father of our spirits; we cannot define how; but we may be quite sure that we should not believe it to more purpose, if God caused every human being, in some unimaginable way, to start full-grown

out of the invisible into the visible world, than we do now, if we dwell on what God has been declared to us to be, and on what man is. When a man has been developed through trials and thoughtfulness and Christ-like submission into a specially perfect Christian, we think of him as God's work surely with more faith and meaning than if he had been made what he is in some odd and surprising manner. We reverently feel and confess that the brother whom we see is a son and creature of the unseen Father and Creator.

And so, I urge, by looking at the world reverently as it actually is, with all its forces, laws, and processes, and at the same time bearing in mind God our Father, we shall best understand the nature and glory of creation. We lose, instead of gaining, as believers, by throwing back creation into what we neither understand nor can care for. The world is more interesting and admirable now than it was millions of years ago. If the contemplation of it suggests irresistibly the idea of gradual progress and evolution, let us ask ourselves whether that idea does not fall in well with the faith and hope of a Christian. What but deep thankfulness should it prompt in our hearts, if we find

that God has in these later days been admonishing us, teaching us, forcing upon us more spiritual conceptions, through the researches of science?

The more devoutly we believe in God as the Creator, with whatever interpretation of the mode of his working, the more are we bound to respect and sympathise with scientific investigation. For what is this, but the study of God's work? Through this we might reasonably expect to receive lessons from God himself. Let us hear God saying to us, 'I your Father am working hitherto.' There is truth in the saying that God wrought for six days and rested on the seventh. It is important that we should not exclude the idea of rest from the Divine Nature. But we ought not so to understand that saying as to conclude that during all these ages of development God has been standing apart and doing nothing. Our Father has been working hitherto. Age after age, week-days and Sabbaths, the Creator has been at work, patiently but without pause bringing the world forward to its present condition. Having wrought hitherto he will continue to work. He bids us look both backwards and forwards. If we have learnt from the past what he has

done, we may expect that he will create new wonders in the future. Whatever he does, he is our Father, and he will reveal his Fatherly glory. It will be our blessedness to have eyes of filial intelligence to behold all that he is pleased to show us; to look around us in the mind of God's children, not doubting that the heaven and the earth are his, being sure that every work of his must be wonderful and worthy of study, but remembering also that Fatherhood and Sonship are greater things than gravitation and the conservation of force and natural selection, and that, whilst it is good to know Laws of Nature, it is better to know the gracious will of Him who is above Nature.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH.[1]

THIS second volume[2] of M. Renan's 'Origines du Christianisme' will scarcely rival the first in the rapidity and extent of its circulation. It was not only its glittering style, its animation, its picturesqueness, its light audacity, its novelty of interpretation, that gained for the 'Vie de Jésus' its extraordinary success; it was the unique interest of the Life treated for the first time in so surprising a manner. The history of the first beginnings of the Christian Faith and Church is not so favourable a subject for the genius of an artist. And M. Renan works in the spirit of an artist rather than of an historian. He is eager, he tells at the close of this volume, to take in hand 'the great Christian Odyssey, the unequalled Epopea' of St. Paul's adventures. The intermediate history wants the artistic unity that may be given to a Life of Jesus or to a Pauliad: but there

[1] The *Contemporary Review*, June 1866.

[2] *Les Apôtres.* Par M. Ernest Renan. Paris: M. Lévy. 1866.

is no falling off in the remarkable faculties which M. Renan has brought to the execution of his work; nor has he at all shifted his position as an interpreter of the sacred history.

It is due to M. Renan to bear in mind what he himself describes as his design. His aim is not to sift the records of our Christian 'Origines,' and to set forth what is logically deducible from these records, but to reconstruct the living history from the suggestions of the fragments which remain. In executing a work of the historical imagination he claims the freest use of hypothesis. To object, therefore, to anything that he has written, 'This is merely M. Renan's fancy,' would be to commit a critical blunder. The question is, whether his restoration of our Parthenon is truly artistic; whether the additions or corrections which he has supplied to the received history are in harmony with the genuine fragments or not; whether his idea of the Life of Christ and of the early Church is or is not consistent with itself and with recognised facts. He himself would have the whole question considered as a purely scientific one, as a matter of exclusively speculative interest. He has no desire to proselytize, no desire to shake the faith of a single Christian, no thought of

exercising any influence upon the direction of things. He holds to the full the doctrine which Mr. Matthew Arnold has been trying to teach us, that the region of ideas ought to be kept separate from that of practice. 'La théorie n'est pas la pratique. L'idéal doit rester l'idéal; il doit craindre de se souiller au contact de la réalité.' And he seems to breathe, to a degree which even Mr. Arnold might envy, the serene atmosphere of that dispassionate region of ideas. He is able to smile from his Olympus upon those who have attacked him most angrily. 'Often,' he says, 'seeing so much *naïveté*, so pious an assurance, such ingenuous anger of souls so beautiful and so good, I have said, like John Huss at the sight of an old woman who was toiling along with a faggot for the fire in which he was burning, "*O sancta simplicitas!*"' We who cannot, and perhaps would not, rise to the same heights, may at any rate learn that by throwing hard words at M. Renan, we should not succeed in making him angry, but should only expose ourselves to his pity or admiration.

There is still a central figure for the earlier portion of this volume. M. Renan is occupied with explaining the rise of the Christian belief

in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus, which, as a real life, ended with the Crucifixion, has a term of apparitional existence in the imaginations of his followers. M. Renan sketches with his old lightness of touch and his old profuse sentimentality this phantom-life, 'la vie d'outre-tombe,' of Jesus. In this part he is perfectly lucid, and his meaning cannot be misunderstood. But when he proceeds to describe the character of the early Church, and of the world in which it was planted, having to deal, no doubt, with complex and contradictory phenomena, he seems to lose his clearness. If the bewildering effect of some of his chapters is partly due to the variety of facts to be taken into account, it is partly occasioned, as I shall endeavour to show, by a want of firmness and consistency in his conclusions.

M. Renan clears the way for his historical inquiries by laying down a preliminary axiomatic principle. 'It is an absolute rule of criticism to give no place in historical narratives to anything miraculous.'[1] The term 'miracle' has proved a very difficult one to define, and the ordinary account of a miracle—that it is a suspension of the laws of nature—has been of late

[1] P. xliii.

very generally repudiated. Some of us have thought it best to renounce the use of the term as a philosophical name for acts or events of a particular kind, and simply to employ it in its original sense of 'a wonder.' But there is no uncertainty as to what M. Renan means, or as to the application of his principle. This absolute rule affirms that Christ did not rise from the dead in any sense or manner whatever except in the delusions of his friends. It makes it simply impossible that he should have had any relations to the Divine Being except those dependent on an organization somewhat finer and more delicate than that of other men. It is not M. Renan's creed that there is nothing mysterious, nothing inexplicable, in the world; but that *a will* has never interfered for a special purpose in the course of things. 'That God is in everything, especially in all that lives, in a permanent manner, is precisely our theory; we only say that no particular interference of a supernatural power has ever been established.'[1] He disbelieves in a moral or spiritual, as much as in a physical, miracle. Christianity, he holds, is only unique in degree; it is a greater religion than Buddhism, but it is of the same class

[1] P. xlvii.

of things. Hellenism, in another department, is just as unique as Christianity: the one is a prodigy of beauty, the other is a prodigy of holiness. 'God is in varying degrees in all that is beautiful, good, and true; but he is never in any one of his manifestations in so exclusive a manner, that the presence of his breath in a religious or philosophical movement ought to be considered as a privilege or an exception.'[1]

Those who come with a prejudgment of this kind to the Christian narratives contained in the Gospels and the Acts have a choice of three solutions, not mutually exclusive, to explain the so-called miraculous portions of them. These are illusion, imposture, legend. The first Christians were impostors: this is a very coarse theory, but it has been held. They were not deceivers, they were themselves deceived: this is another theory. There was neither imposture nor illusion in the strict sense, but popular imaginations took shape in legends, which, by a common error, were mistaken for history: this is the third theory. This last is the great modern theory, which seemed to be carrying everything before it on the non-

[1] Pp. l., li.

supernaturalist side. A certain ferment, in which Messianic ideas were very active, is supposed to have taken place amongst the population of Palestine during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, of the working of which we have unfortunately no real knowledge, but which left as a residuum the Christian Church. This movement might probably have died out as obscurely as it began, had it not chanced to fire the imagination of a remarkable man, who is best entitled to be called the founder of Christianity. This man, St. Paul, has left not only the earliest, but almost the only authentic, writings of the first half-century of the Church's existence. It may be inferred from these, that a certain nucleus of true reports concerning a hero of the Galilean peasantry had been handed down, round which legendary tales speedily crystallized. But our existing books were not written by the men whose names they bear. The impulse to compose books was the controversial impulse of a later generation. The Church was divided into parties, and each party produced supposititious histories and letters to justify its own position.

This was the prevailing theory of the non-catholic criticism, when M. Renan, still less

professing to be a Christian than the most advanced German critics, created great astonishment by denying, in his 'Vie de Jésus,' its most fundamental and most cherished conclusions. He maintained that the popular imagination does not transcend itself in its creations; that the Jesus of the Gospels could not be a legendary hero, because he was morally superior to the generation which was said to have imagined him; that the real Jesus of the Galilean lake was even a greater man than the Gospels represent him to have been. Of all the books in the New Testament the advanced critics were perhaps most confident that the Gospel of St. John was not genuine. They had proved to demonstration that it was a forgery of the second century, written in the interest of a debased theosophy as unlike as possible to what may have been the creed of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. M. Renan said, that he believed this Gospel to be in the main the work of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee; and that in respect of biographical details, it was actually more to be depended on than the synoptic Gospels. And he proceeded, with the help of the four Gospels, to construct a tolerably full representation of the

life and of the teaching of Jesus. Having to find some solvent for 'the supernatural element' in the Gospels, he took more than half from illusion, a fourth part from imposture, very little from legend. The illusion, for the most part, he enthusiastically admires; the imposture he excuses with scarcely an expression of regret; the legendary accretions he passes over with little notice. His theory is, that Jesus and his followers lived in dreams; that their days were spent in one long succession of beautiful ecstasies; and that when the coarse practical world intruded itself into their idealism, they were obliged,—as all are who deal with the practical,—to manage it with a little deception.

The want of feeling for real human life betrayed by what is briefly described as the Tübingen school of critics, has made their speculations very unacceptable to the mass of mankind. The personages of the New Testament history have too much flesh and blood to be easily resolvable into legendary embodiments of ideas. M. Renan's theory is another hypothesis offered to those who cannot accept the Christian account of our 'Origines.' But to the English taste, at least, the French senti-

mentalism is even more disagreeable than the German idealism. The latter does not take hold of the English mind; the former—to speak plainly—disgusts it. It is a curious question what effect M. Renan's 'Vie de Jésus' has had upon European opinion. Though he has had some apologists, there are no signs, as yet, I believe, of the creation of a new school. What we are at present most concerned to observe, is that he maintains his independent position with great spirit in the volume before us, rather pushing forward and strengthening than abandoning what was peculiar in his views.

He professes to be quite unshaken in his estimate of the fourth Gospel, and he maintains the Acts to be the work of Luke, the companion of St. Paul, whom he also believes to have written the Gospel which bears his name. With reference to St. John's Gospel he speaks as follows :—

> The use I have made of it in my 'Vie de Jésus' is the point on which enlightened critics have raised most objections. Almost all learned men who apply the rational method to the history of theology reject the fourth Gospel as apocryphal in all respects. I have given much renewed consideration to this problem, and I have not been able to modify in any sensible degree my first opinion. Only, as I differ on

this point from the general sentiment, I have made it a duty to expound in detail the reasons for my persistence. I shall do this in an appendix to a revised and corrected edition of the 'Vie de Jésus,' which will shortly appear.[1]

He grounds his belief in the genuineness of the Acts upon the perfectly homogeneous character of this work, and upon the strong marks it bears of having been written by one who was really present with St. Paul where he professes to have been his companion. M. Renan is far from supposing, however, that all that either St. John or St. Luke says is true. And the weak point of his reconstructed history, in the eyes of a rational critic, is that he is guided by little except his own feeling of what is credible in selecting what to receive as true and what to reject. He infers the disposition of St. Luke from his writings. He finds in him no partisan of St. Paul, though he had been his friend,—'one would say, a disciple of Peter rather than of Paul.' Instead of the stiff Protestant individualism of Paul, Luke had the docile optimist tendencies of a good Catholic. His great desire is to smooth over the dissensions and scandals of the early Church, with a view to edification:—

[1] P. ix.

The dominant character of the Acts, like that of the third Gospel, is a tender piety, a lively sympathy with the Gentiles; a conciliatory spirit, an extreme belief in the supernatural, a love for the poor and the humble; a strong democratic sentiment, or rather a persuasion that the people is naturally Christian, and is only prevented by the higher classes from following its good instincts; an exalted idea of the power of the Church and its rulers; a very remarkable taste for communistic life.[1]

These characteristics of the writer, it is obvious, are discovered by the easy process of abstracting them from the history. 'But it will be understood,' says M. Renan, 'that such a writer was the least capable in the world of representing things as they occurred. Whenever we can check the narrative of the Acts we find it faulty and systematic.'[2] M. Renan makes the worst of the apparent discrepancies between the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians. But he ought to admit that two accounts of the same thing may be very different, and yet neither of them false. He says himself that there is 'an astonishing precision about the last pages of the Acts; they are the most completely historical records that we have of the origin of Christianity.' And yet there is scarcely a more difficult recon-

[1] P. xxv. [2] P. xxix.

ciliation to be made between any two parts of the New Testament, than between the account in the Acts of the interviews between St. Paul and the Jews at Rome, and the condition of the Christians at Rome as it is implied in the Epistle to the Romans.

For the history of what took place between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost, M. Renan relies first on St. John's Gospel, next on St. Mark's. It pleases him also to accept what St. Paul says in 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6, 7, as perfectly authentic. From the details thus obtained, married to his hypothesis of illusions just tinged with fraud, issues a story which M. Renan would have us believe is the most natural thing in the world. If he could have been placed in Jerusalem on the day of the crucifixion, he would have been able to prophesy the resurrection with absolute certainty. Given the disciples, and their state of mind, it was an impossibility that Jesus should not rise again. M. Renan loves strong effects. He delights to have a showy case. It is a pleasure to his genius to exhibit 'exaltation' performing the most difficult feats. Passion and sympathy have often produced strange creations, but they never did anything to equal the invention of the resurrection, be-

cause never before or since have there been a passion and a sympathy so absorbing. Here is a story on which sentiment may be justly lavished with the fullest hand.

On the first day of the week some of the most ardent of the disciples come very early to the tomb in which the body of Jesus had been laid. The body has been removed, and they feel at first nothing but the bitterness of disappointed grief. But there was one among them whose organization was too delicate, whose soul was too poetical, whose passion of love was too profound, to acquiesce with dulness in the real. Mary of Magdala stood alone by the empty tomb. She heard a sound behind her. This trifling noise was the electric spark which woke up her prepared but slumbering imagination. She saw a man standing. Her fancy, (we must suppose,) hesitating shyly to take the bold step it had already resolved upon, first pretends to itself to think it is the gardener. But the shade speaks her name. She now sees it to be 'le fantôme du maître exquis.' Jesus is now effectually risen :—

In wonderful crises of this kind, to see after others is nothing; all the merit is to see for the first time, for the others immediately model their sight after the

received type. It belongs to fine organizations to conceive the image promptly, with that fitness which belongs to a kind of inward sense of design. The glory of the resurrection belongs then to Mary of Magdala. After Jesus, Mary has done the most for the foundation of Christianity. The shade created by the delicate senses of the Magdalen yet hovers over the world. Queen and patron of idealists, Magdalen has known better than any one how to affirm her dream, to impose on all the sacred vision of her own passionate soul. Her great woman's affirmation 'He is risen!' has been the basis of the faith of humanity. Avaunt, impuissant reason! Think not to apply a cold analysis to this master-work of idealism and love. If wisdom gives up the task of consoling this poor human race, betrayed by fate, let madness try what it can do. Where is the sage who has given to the world so much joy as the possessed Mary of Magdala?'

Our reason being thus warned off, we can only follow wonderingly in the steps of the enchanter. With all the resources of his eloquence and pictorial faculty, M. Renan seeks to transport us into the time when, for some few months or years, imagination and fancy had their day, and wrought out in freedom their finest creations. All is dream, emotion, joy, nature, poetry. It is the day of woman. The prosaic Church has never done justice—such is the way of this cold, hard world—to ces touchantes dé-

moniaques, ces pécheresses converties, ces vraies fondatrices du Christianisme.'[1] It is like St. Paul, that puritanical Protestant, never to mention them. The two disciples, however, who walked on that first day of the week to Emmaus, were not far behind Mary Magdalen. A stranger joined them, a pious man, well versed in the Scriptures. They invited him to take the evening meal with them. The hour of the evening meal had a peculiar charm to the followers of Jesus. 'How often had they not seen, at that moment, the well-loved Master forget the burden of the day in the freedom of cheerful conversation, and, refreshed by some drops of exquisite wine (d'un vin très-noble), speak to them of the fruit of the vine which he would drink new with them in his Father's kingdom.'[2] On this day the disciples were so overcome by these memories, that they could only see Jesus in their companion, when he took bread and broke it. The spell continued to work upon them so strangely, that they could scarcely perceive his departure. When their reverie left them, they knew that they had seen Jesus.

The charm grows. When the disciples are together, a casual breath of air fanning their

[1] P. 31. [2] P. 20.

faces is enough to make them all believe that Jesus has come amongst them visibly, and is talking to them. Appearances of Jesus multiply through the eagerness of competition. But the fever of their souls makes them restless. A sort of *nostalgia* takes possession of them. The women in particular must return to the scenes where they had enjoyed so much happiness. 'The odious town became intolerable to them; they began to dream, with a feeling of melancholy, of the lake and the beautiful mountains where they had tasted the kingdom of God.'[1] They longed to live over again 'those months of joyous intoxication, during which the Great Founder laid the bases of a new order for humanity;' to taste once more 'the ambrosia of the Galilean preaching.'[2] A 'besoin de cœur' drove them to the smiling mountain slopes, at this season bright with red anemones, where their interrupted dream of the sweet kingdom of God might begin again. So they returned to Galilee.

The air of those localities, and their imaginations, did not disappoint them. There are remarkable qualities in the Galilean atmosphere.

[1] P. 28. [2] Pp. i., iv.

One day five hundred believers followed their chiefs to the top of a Galilean hill :—

> The air on those heights is full of strange reflections (*miroitements*). The same illusion which formerly had happened to the most intimate disciples (the Transfiguration) was produced again. The assembled crowd fancied they saw the form of the divine spectre traced in the air : all fell on their faces and worshipped. The sentiment inspired by the clear horizon of these mountains is the idea of the amplitude of the world, with the desire to conquer it. On one of the neighbouring peaks, Satan, showing the kingdoms of the earth and their glory, had offered them, it was said, to Jesus, if he would fall down and worship him. This time it was Jesus who, from these sacred summits, showed his disciples the whole earth and assured them it should be theirs. They came down from the mountain persuaded that the Son of God had ordered them to convert the human race, and had promised to be with them to the end of the ages. A strange ardour, a divine fire, filled them as they came away from the interview. They regarded themselves as missionaries of the world, capable of any prodigies. St. Paul saw several of those who had been present at this extraordinary scene. After five-and-twenty years, their impression of it was as strong and vivid as on the first day.[1]

It is not without a sense of degradation that M. Renan returns to such mean details as the

[1] Pp. 35–6.

question, How the body of Jesus had disappeared from the tomb? He mentions four ways, in one or other of which he thinks the removal may have taken place:—Some unnamed disciples may have come to the tomb earlier than those mentioned, and have carried away the body as a precious object of care. The Jews may have abstracted it, in order to prevent the excitement which was likely to renew itself about the corpse of the popular prophet. The proprietor of the tomb which had been invaded may have made away with its unwelcome tenant. Or, the devoted women themselves may have been drawn into the pious fraud of secretly disposing of the body with a view to establishing the belief in the Resurrection. 'The feminine conscience, under the sway of passion, is capable of the most eccentric illusions. Mary of Magdala had been, in the language of the time, possessed by seven devils.'[1] Let a veil be drawn over these mysteries. The question is as otiose as it is insoluble.

It is not easy to quote speculations like these without betraying the feelings they excite in one's mind. And, if we could attain to M. Renan's own 'supreme indifference' as to their

[1] P. 43.

bearing upon the faith and the practice of mankind, we can hardly be expected to extinguish the natural emotions of intellectual and æsthétic appreciation. But readers of the book we are reviewing will know that I have not given a false air by exaggeration to M. Renan's opinions. Indeed, if he was to accept the statements of St. John or St. Paul as essentially authentic, the one course open to him was to push the ecstatic theory to extremity. As it was, he became enamoured of the theory, and welcomed with avidity the narratives to which it was to be applied. He has deserted the mythical school, and has revived, with a brilliancy and animation which constitute a just title to originality, the pre-Straussian method of simple rationalism. A certain historical sense, a feeling that you must find a basis for great institutions in human convictions, that crowds are moved by individual energy and resolution, has combined with a genius for dramatic exposition and with a sentimentalism which we English can hardly understand, to produce M. Renan's idea of the origin of Christianity. We may let him remind us with advantage that we ought not to think of such times as those which we are considering as if they were cold, flat, dull periods. There

was unquestionably an exaltation of spirit prevailing amongst the followers of Jesus, such as we commonly make no attempt to realize. Some of the phenomena we read of in the Acts and the Epistles may be naturally related to this state of mind; and much of the success of the Apostolic preaching may be due to its contagious power. It is wise to remember also the character of the evidence of our Lord's resurrection;—as that no one is said to have seen him rise, that he appeared to believers only, and that his appearances were of a very mysterious nature. The resurrection of Jesus Christ will assuredly commend itself as a fact far more easily and powerfully to those who consider it in its relation to the spiritual history of mankind, than to those who regard it as a monstrous phenomenon requiring the most conclusive demonstration. I the more willingly pass from the subject with this short remark, as the reader may see in Mr. Westcott's small but masterly work, 'The Gospel of the Resurrection,' what support this cardinal event receives, and what light it diffuses, when it is allowed to occupy its true central position.

The history of the Christian Church contained in the Acts may be said to have two

starting-points. One of these is the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the other, the conversion of St. Paul. Neither of these occurrences presents any difficulties to M. Renan; it is easy to him to rationalize both.

When the hallucinations of the disciples as to the appearances of Jesus in Galilee began to wear themselves out, the apostles, accompanied by a certain number of persons resolved to share their fortunes, returned to Jerusalem. There they fed their fancies with expectations of a special coming of the Spirit. One day, as they were assembled together, a storm burst forth suddenly, the windows were blown open, flashes of lightning filled the air. The longing was fulfilled; the Spirit had come. From that day they surrendered themselves freely to a particular form of nervous disorder which they called 'speaking with tongues.' New disciples joined themselves to the brotherhood. Although these men were not intoxicated, like the Galileans, by a personal attachment to Jesus, they became infected forthwith by the same kind of exaltation. We have to remember, not only the ignorance of these poor people, but the difference of their constitutions from the European type:—

Like most Orientals, they ate little, which helped

to keep them in a state of exaltation. The sobriety of the Syrian, which is the cause of his physical weakness, produces a permanent condition of fever and nervous susceptibility. Our continuous efforts of thought are impossible with such a regimen. But this cerebral and muscular debility brings on, without apparent cause, quick alternations of grief and joy, which place the soul in continual *rapport* with God.[1]

In another passage, which it is difficult to imagine as written with any but a mocking intention, at all events when it is turned from French into English, the hysterical theory of the origin of the Christian faith is perhaps carried to its furthest development:—

Tears above all were held to be a celestial grace. This charming gift, the privilege of none but very good and very pure souls, was exhibited in endless forms of sweetness. One knows what power delicate natures, especially women, draw from the divine faculty of being able to weep abundantly. . . . To weep became a pious act; those who could not preach, nor speak with tongues, nor work miracles, wept. Praying, preaching, exhorting, all was done with tears; the reign of tears was come. You might have said that there was a general melting of souls, and that they sought, in the absence of a language capable of rendering their feelings, to shed themselves abroad in a lively and expressive utterance of their whole inward being.[2]

[1] P. 72. [2] Pp. 73-4.

M. Renan, in writing this passage, refers to two chapters, Acts xx. 19, 31, and Romans viii. 23, 26. It was not only then the hardy fishermen of Galilee, or the adventurous Jewish emigrants who assembled at Jerusalem from all parts of the world in which they had established themselves, to whom it was so natural to pass without intermission from one hysterical fit into another, but Saul of Tarsus was a prominent example of this kind of habit. Nothing was so likely as that he should have a fit, with a suspension of consciousness, on his way to Damascus. Such attacks are not uncommon in those parts. 'I myself had an experience of this kind,' says M. Renan, 'at Byblos; with other principles, I should certainly have taken the hallucinations I then had for visions.'[1] But our author, not being a slave to consistency, does not on the whole represent St. Paul as an example of cerebral and muscular debility, a touching person whose chief gift was to melt over upon the souls about him. He gives indeed a very different account of him, which it is curious to compare with Professor Jowett's view of the same character. Mr. Jowett's idea of St. Paul comes near one part of M. Renan's, in repre-

[1] P. 180.

senting him as a man who lived in 'an ecstasy,' as weak and trembling, 'a creature of nervous sensibility.' But he further describes him as more like a middle-age saint than like 'Luther and the Reformers;' as so essentially sympathetic and dependent upon others that 'his natural character was the type of that communion of the Spirit which he preached.' M. Renan perceives that his constitution was evidently 'très-résistante,' to bear all that he went through during many years. St. Paul's temperament, according to M. Renan, is that of 'a rigid, self-asserting Protestant'[1]—he is the 'illustrious founder of Protestantism.'[2] In Professor Jowett's picture, we see 'the image of one lowly and cast down.' 'Self is banished from him, and has no more place in him, as he goes on his way to fulfil the work of Christ. No figure is too strong to express his humiliation in himself, or his exaltation in Christ.' In M. Renan's, we see 'a character rigid, somewhat unsocial (peu liant), inclined to isolation.'[3] Paul was 'a man of action, full of fire, moderately mystical. Revolt and protestation were his habitual sentiments. He was not made to accept a secondary place; his haughty indi-

[1] P. xiii. [2] P. 187. [3] P. 206.

viduality required a distinct position' (un rôle à part).[1] We read of 'cet orgueilleux, ses violences, son inflexible personnalité, sa hardiesse, sa force d'initiative, sa décision.'[2] He is 'that great *retractile* soul.' It is true, no doubt, that there was in St. Paul's character a marvellous and perplexing combination of qualities seldom found together; it is also true, I believe, that we do not thoroughly understand that character without recognising in it something of the element thus exaggerated, a consciousness of individuality, a sensitiveness about his own position and about the behaviour of others to himself, which might have turned to jealous exactingness and readiness to take offence. M. Renan, with his rapid transitions, rather plays with our imagination, and challenges it to impossible feats, than helps us to realize one of the most commanding and most singular of human characters. But there will be a welcome freshness in the study of St. Paul's life by one who thinks of him as chiefly remarkable for haughtiness and independence. Let us not be ungrateful for M. Renan's new outlines of character, which well deserve consideration;—as when, for example, he assigns to St. Peter an open, kindly, but rather weak and

[1] Pp. 210, 211. [2] P. 186.

yielding disposition; or as when, instead of making St. Barnabas the noiseless consoler of sickness and affliction, he presents him to us as the popular preacher, the enlightened Liberal, the leader of the party of progress.

M. Renan's touches are always brilliant and decided. Hesitation is a weakness unknown to him. But this does not make him the better historian. When he has to deal with the complicated phenomena of a difficult historical period, his habit of indulging in piquant sketches does not help him to draw trustworthy general conclusions. The chief part of this volume consists of descriptions of the early Church, of the condition of the world at that time, and of the relations between the Church and the world. Nothing can be clearer than each description. But after a time we find our general conceptions growing confused, and we begin to suspect our author of some carelessness as to the agreement of his sketches, and still more as to the consistency of the opinions he expresses. As I do not wish to throw this out as a vague charge, I proceed to substantiate it by some examples.

The great question to which M. Renan's book attempts an answer is this: Wherein did the real strength of the Christian faith consist? Now,

to begin with, M. Renan in the earlier part of the book ascribes, as we have seen, a primary importance to the belief in the resurrection of Jesus. This is 'le dogme générateur du Christianisme.'[1] Mary Magdalene, next to Jesus, has done the most for the foundation of Christianity. Her affirmation, 'He is risen!' has been the basis of the faith of humanity. By this she has given more joy to the world than all the sages.[2] Whilst the spell of Mary, 'queen and patron of idealists,' is upon him, M. Renan treats the actual founders of the Church at Jerusalem as heavy, prosaic persons, of whom he is somewhat impatient.

Jesus, having been carried up on his cloud to the right hand of his Father, leaves us with men; and what a fall, O heaven! it is! The reign of poetry is past.[3] We understand how great the Master was by seeing how small the disciples were.[4]

But after a while nothing can be more enthusiastic than the admiration with which he contemplates the social institutions established by these disciples at Jerusalem. He discovers that all the religions of which we can trace the beginning have been spread by social much more than by theological causes. Buddhism

[1] P. 10. [2] P. 13. [3] P. 55. [4] P. 56.

and Christianity have both found their strength in the attractions they offered to the very poor.

What was the condition of the poor in those days in Palestine? M. Renan has two answers, hardly consistent with one another. The Christians at Jerusalem—

> Worked no doubt for their living; but manual labour, in the Jewish society of that time, was very far from burdensome (occupait très-peu). . . . Amongst us, material wants are so difficult to satisfy, that the man who lives by the labour of his hands is obliged to work for twelve or fifteen hours a day; the man of leisure can alone give time to the things of the soul; the acquisition of instruction is a rare and costly thing. But in those old societies, of which the East of our own day still gives us an idea, in those climates where Nature is so lavish to man and so unexacting, the life of the worker had plenty of leisure. A sort of common instruction placed every one *au courant* with the ideas of the time. Food and raiment were sufficient; and these were provided by a few hours of irregular labour. The remainder of the day belonged to dreaming, to passion.[1]

But presently, M. Renan, for another purpose, draws a different picture. 'The number of poor persons, in the first century of our era, was very considerable in Judæa. The country is naturally denuded of resources by which a comfortable

[1] P. 59.

subsistence is obtained.' There was wealth, but it was confined to a certain number of families :—

> The true theocratical Jew, turning his back on the Roman civilization, was only made poorer by it. A whole class was formed of holy persons, pious, fanatical, strict observers of the law, altogether miserable externally. . . . Never did hatred equal that felt by these poor men of God against the splendid structures which began to cover the country, and against the works of the Romans. Obliged, if they would not perish of hunger, to work at these buildings, which appeared to them monuments of pride and forbidden luxury, they thought themselves victims of rich men who were wicked, corrupt, faithless to the law. One can understand what a welcome would be given, in such a social condition, to an association of mutual aid. The little Christian Church must have seemed a paradise.[1]

M. Renan accepts the account given in the Acts of the common life of the first Christian society as substantially true. The Essenians and Therapeutæ had already given examples of life in common; the idea of Judaism was naturally realised in such a life. Christianity is essentially communistic; it can only be organised to perfection in cenobitic institutions, in the monastery or the convent. When difficulties as

[1] Pp. 116–117.

to distribution arose in the Church, the diaconate was created,—the oldest, the most effective, of Holy Orders :—

It was the proclamation of the truth that social questions are those which claim the first attention. It was the foundation of political economy so far as it is religious. The deacons were the best preachers of Christianity. . . . They did much more than the apostles. They were the creators of all that was most solid and most durable in Christianity. Very early, women were admitted to this employment. They bore, as in our time, the name of *sisters*.[1] First they were widows; after a time virgins were preferred for this office. The primitive Church was guided in all this by a wonderful tact. With a science, which was profound because it came from the heart, those good and simple men laid the foundations of the great, peculiarly Christian, work of charity. They had nothing to serve them as a model for such institutions. A vast ministry of beneficence and mutual aid, in which both sexes brought their different qualities and combined their efforts for the relief of human suffering,—this was the holy creation which issued from the labour of those two or three first years.[2]

This heroic effort against selfishness could not continue without modifications :—

But the wants which it represents will last eternally.

[1] In the places to which M. Renan refers, 'sister,' like 'brother,' evidently means fellow-Christian.

[2] Pp. 120–1.

Life in common, in the second half of the middle age, having been subservient to the abuses of an intolerant Church, the monastery having become too often a feudal fief or the barracks of a dangerous and fanatical soldiery, the modern spirit has been very severe towards cenobitism. We have forgotten that it is in the common life that the soul of man has tasted most joy. The psalm, 'Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!' has ceased to be ours. But when modern individualism has borne its last fruits; when humanity, dwarfed, dismal, impuissant, shall return to great institutions and their strong discipline; when our paltry shop-keeping society,—I say, rather, when our world of pigmies, shall have been driven out with scourges by the heroic and idealistic portions of humanity,—then life in common will be prized again as much as ever. A number of great things, such as science, will organise themselves in a monastic form, with hereditary succession other than that of blood. The importance which our age attributes to the family will diminish. Self-love, the essential law of civil society, will not content great souls. Meeting together from the most opposite points, all will unite in a league against vulgarity. Sense will again be seen in the words of Jesus and the ideas of the middle age on poverty. . . . The splendid ideal traced by the author of the Acts shall be inscribed as a prophetic revelation over the entrance of the paradise of humanity—'All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And breaking

bread with one accord, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.'[1]

When we have offered an unaffected tribute of admiration to his eloquence, just wondering a little, perhaps, that the author could have found it in his heart to speak depreciatingly before of the men who realised so gloriously this eternal ideal, is it not a just cause of astonishment and complaint, that within fourteen pages we should come upon such a cruel disenchantment as this that follows ?—

It was a piece of extreme good fortune for nascent Christianity that its first attempts at association, essentially communistic, were so soon shattered. Attempts of this kind breed abuses so flagrant that communistic establishments are condemned to fall to pieces in a very short time, or to disown quickly the principle which created them. Thanks to the persecution of the year 37, the cenobitic Church of Jerusalem was delivered from the trial of time.[2]

Is it the panegyrist whom we have just been reading who speaks thus of the result of the creation founded with so much science ?—

The common chest at Jerusalem was not sufficient to feed the poor. From all parts of the world, it was necessary to send help to save those noble mendicants from dying of hunger. Communism had created at

[1] Pp. 131-3. [2] P. 147.

Jerusalem an incurable pauperism and a complete incapacity for great enterprises. . . . Such was the improvidence in this poor starving Church of Jerusalem, that the smallest accident reduced the community to extremity. . . . The decadence of the Church of Jerusalem, in fact, was rapid. It is the peculiarity of institutions founded on communism to have a first brilliant moment—for communism implies always great exaltation,—but to degenerate quickly, communism being contrary to human nature. In an access of virtue, man thinks he can get rid of self-love and individual interest; self-love takes its revenge by proving that absolute disinterestedness breeds evils more serious than were thought to be avoided by the suppression of property.[1]

How will the writer of these sentences save himself from the strokes of the heroic and idealistic scourge?

It is not worth while to inquire curiously what are the real opinions of a thinker on social questions who positively identifies 'proud poverty' with 'inbred mendicancy.' Describing the Jewish population in foreign cities, M. Renan says that—

Touching examples were found there of concord, of charity, of mutual aid, of contentment, of industry (de goût pour le travail), of proud poverty. Mendicancy, which in a later time was a peculiarly Christian cus-

[1] Pp. 232–42.

tom, was then characteristic of the Jews. The beggar by profession, 'formed by his mother,' presented himself to the mind of the poets of the day as a Jew.[1]

Every one is ready to admit with M. Renan, that a warm and beneficent friendliness continued to characterise the Christian community as it spread from Judæa westwards, and that this quality proved a powerful recommendation of the doctrine of the Christian preachers. When we go on to ask, what was the special condition of the world in that age, our author gives us in reply several interesting answers, illustrated by various and original learning. It would be the part of a narrow and ignorant criticism to fasten eagerly upon appearances of inconsistency in these answers. The apparent contradictions may not be the fault of the writer, but may belong to the nature of the case. Speaking most generally, we should all find ourselves using some such language as this. The world was prepared, *both* by what was good and hopeful in it *and* by what was miserable or desperate in it, to receive Christianity. The penetrating inquirer may show strikingly how much there was of the good, and also how much there was of the evil. But we expect discrimination in a scientific historian, and we

[1] P. 293.

cannot help losing faith in him when he flatly contradicts himself.

The question whether the condition of the world in respect of happiness was on the whole a better or worse one, when compared with its condition in previous and subsequent ages, must be so difficult to answer, that a more cautious historian than M. Renan would probably abstain from giving an opinion upon it. M. Renan is ready, as usual, to pronounce a judgment, but he leaves us in some embarrassment. This is what he says first :—

En somme, notwithstanding the exactions of the governors and the violences inseparable from an absolute government, the world, in many respects, had never yet been so happy. . . . Never had the man who did not care to occupy himself with politics lived so much at his ease. . . . In those of the conquered countries in which political wants had not existed for ages, and where the people were only deprived of the right of tearing one another to pieces by continual wars, the empire was an era of prosperity and of well-being such as had never been known; we may even add without paradox, of liberty. . . . To be in easy circumstances was very general. Morals were not what we often imagine.

At Rome, it is true, cynicism and corruption prevailed; and some countries, such as Egypt, were utterly degraded :—

But in most of the provinces there was a middle

class in which goodness, conjugal fidelity, the domestic virtues, honesty, were widely spread. Is there anywhere an ideal of family life amongst the honest townsfolk of small towns more charming than that which Plutarch has left us? What *bonhommie!* what gentle manners! what chaste and amiable simplicity! Chæronea was evidently not the only place in which life was so pure and so innocent.[1]

But when he has been describing some of the less favourable aspects of the world, M. Renan concludes:—'*En somme*, the middle of the first century is one of the worst epochs of ancient history.'[2] As to morality, he warns us not to take our opinions from satirists, and he warns us also against St. Paul's famous impeachment of the world in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. He treats this passage very oddly. In one place he compares it to the notions of 'an honest working man of our own time, who, imbued by socialist declamations, represents to himself "the aristocracy" under the blackest colours.'[3] In another place, calling it 'a much too severe opinion,' he says that St. Paul 'did not know the high Roman Society,' and declaimed like a preacher.[4] But what he himself tells us is this:—'The Roman aristocracy aban-

[1] Pp. 312, 3117.
[2] P. 343.
[3] P. 294.
[4] P. 309, *note*.

doned itself to the most unbridled Saturnalia of crime that the world remembers.'[1]

Greek life he again commends, as in the passage just quoted. 'Greece,' he says,—

> Was satisfied with herself, proud of her history, and of her brilliant mythology. . . . That was due to the eternal youth, the patriotism, the gaiety, which have always characterized the true Hellene, and which at the present day make the Greek almost a stranger to the profound anxieties by which we are preyed upon.[2]

[The claims of the modern Greek, then, to be of the genuine Hellenic stock, are allowed by M. Renan!] But a few pages before our author had said,—

> The ancient Greek life, a life of struggles, a completely outward life, now satisfied no one. It had been charming in its day; but that brilliant Olympus of a democracy of demigods, having lost its freshness, had become dry, cold, insignificant, empty, superficial, for want of goodness and solid honesty. This was what justified the Macedonian dominion, and afterwards the Roman administration.[3]

The provincial life, in general, is most frequently denounced by M. Renan as 'cold.' In the heathen world 'it was freezingly cold, as on a level shelterless plain. Life, so *triste* in the bosom

[1] P. 304. [2] P. 339. [3] P. 310.

of Paganism, recovered its charm and its value in the warm atmospheres of the synagogue and the Church.'[1]

In these contradictory statements, which show him—to say the least—to be extremely careless of consistency, I have given specimens of the principal aspects under which the history of the time he is describing presents itself to M. Renan's mind. Perhaps the most novel feature of his work, as a picture of the age, is his account of the prevalence of clubs and confraternities under the Empire, and of their relations both to the Church and to the Imperial Government. We know that we have to make allowance for heightened colours in every sketch that our author draws. When he is speaking of clubs, clubs are everything. Clubs kept alive morality; the Empire perished through its ill-judged opposition to clubs; the future of modern society turns upon clubs. But he appears to show by good evidence—especially that of inscriptions, which he rightly appeals to throughout the volume as of high historical value—that the various associations called ἔρανοι and θίασοι in Greek, and *collegia*, or *cœtus*, or *sodalicia* in Latin, were of more importance with reference

[1] P. 293.

to social and religious history than has been hitherto supposed. There were dining clubs, benefit clubs, burial clubs,—the last especially being in great vogue amongst the poorest classes,—and religious confraternities for practising special rites. 'If there still remained in the Greek world a little love, piety, and religious morality, it was thanks to the liberty of these private religions.'[1] The Roman Emperors Julius, Augustus, Claudius, Trajan, had a great fear of these associations, and sought to suppress or restrain them by rigorous laws. Christianity partook of the attractions, and shared the odium in the eyes of the authorities, of the burial-clubs. The conflict between State absolutism and the liberty of private association became a deadly one. The authors of the *Code Civil* have inherited from the Roman Empire a distrust of associations:—

> Upon the future law concerning associations, it will depend whether modern society shall have the fate of ancient society or not. An example ought to suffice: the Roman Empire had linked its destiny to the law on the *cœtus illiciti*, the *illicita collegia*. The Christians and the Barbarians, accomplishing herein the work of the human conscience, broke the law to

[1] P. 353.

pieces; the Empire, which was attached to it, foundered with it.[1]

To speak briefly, the explanation of the early growth of Christianity offered to us in this volume is as follows:—The world of that age was in a state of solution; old religions were dying out, national distinctions were melting away. The idea of a human kind was beginning to occupy the void left by the ancient devotion to a country, and at the same time human nature was craving some new bonds, closer and tenderer than that of being subjects together of imperial Rome. A religion of the poor, monotheistic, knowing nothing of distinctions of country or race, thinking only of drawing out human love and assuaging human misery, met the precise demand of the time, and satisfied all its humane instincts. Christianity was a great social movement of the people and for the people. In the eye of the modern philosopher the Christian religion is terribly encumbered by its clinging supernaturalism; but in the age of its rise this adjunct offended almost no one. Every one then believed in the supernatural; the decay of the pagan religions had rather stimulated than deadened the appetite for the

[1] P. 364.

marvellous. The dogmas and legends of the new religion were therefore no hindrance to the victorious career of its persuasive morality.

If we Christians cannot accept this explanation as satisfactory, in what form shall we most simply state our objection to it? We may reply, The supernaturalism for which you apologise, as the local or temporary garb in which the religion of humanity presented itself to a credulous age, we take to have been the living principle of the new faith. We bring no reproach against searching historical inquiries; we have as good reason as you have to study with interest all the facts which illustrate the preparation of the world for the Gospel. Still less are we jealous of any praise that may be given to the warm moral life of the earliest Christian society —except, indeed, when it is eulogised as radically anti-national, or as properly breeding a servile temper, or as impulsively producing social creations which could only end in disaster and ruin. But we believe that what told most powerfully in favour of the Christian preaching, winning for it attention at the beginning, and going on to sustain the faith and life of those who received it, was its claim to be *a Gospel from heaven.* This is what appears on the face

of our documents. The idea of a Divine Gospel, it cannot be denied, runs through every recorded address, every extant letter, of the apostles of Christ. The most unsparing application of the critical pruning-knife to the New Testament literature does not make this idea less prominent. Take the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians. It would be idle to ask whether the announcement of a Gospel is not the beginning and the end of St. Paul's profession. But what is it that he dreads and assails as trenching upon the evangelical principle? No scepticism as to the fact of Jesus being the Son of God exalted to the Father's right hand, but an intolerant Jewish resolve to fasten the observance of their law as Divine upon the Gentiles. All the apostles equally were witnesses of Jesus and the resurrection. They had no doubt whatever that the success of their preaching was due to the fact of their proclaiming a Saviour from heaven. There were men in the world, even in the first century, wise enough to think this announcement folly. But the apostles did not speculate about what was enlightened and philosophical; they felt what was powerful to save. 'After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom

knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of their proclamation to save those who believed.' You speak of what the world was hungering after; you tell us what conjunction of circumstances conspired to make its spiritual craving keen and general. But did mankind hunger for anything so much as for an assurance that the world was not the sport of chance or the creation of a self-evolving force, but that there was a God in heaven who cared for his human creatures,—that righteousness and love were seated on the invisible throne? The Hellenic, the Ausonian, the Syrian divinities had fallen or were falling from the sky; were the poor people of that age likely to be as content as a modern Pantheist with an utterly vacant heaven? M. Renan himself tells us—it is one of the points of his history—that during the epoch of the Empire there was a scientific decline accompanying a moral progress. He finds an evidence of the decline in the fact that Marcus Aurelius, a man morally superior to all the old Greek philosophers, had notions as to the realities of the universe inferior to those of Aristotle and Epicurus; 'for he believes at times in the Gods as in limited and distinct persons, in dreams and presages.' We contend, therefore, that according

to simple historical truth, it was the announcement of a self-manifesting God, of a God who made himself known through limitations, that wrought most powerfully as a Gospel upon the conscience of the world.

In the early part of his book M. Renan partially recognises this fact. There, the Resurrection, or the belief in it, is 'le dogme générateur du Christianisme.' It is the dream of Mary of Magdala which has given consolation to humanity. She and her companions are the noble women who have created the faith of the world. M. Renan says with great truth,—

> Jesus himself had but one dogma, his divine Sonship and the divinity of his mission. The whole creed of the primitive Church is contained in one line,—Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This belief rested on a peremptory argument, the fact of the Resurrection, of which the disciples gave themselves out as witnesses.[1]

But presently he forgets the power of these idealistic imaginations, that 'charm' on which he has dilated with so much fervour. Why does he not attribute the success of a Barnabas and a Saul, in part at least, to this dear dream that the eternal God had actually spoken to men,

[1] P. 91.

that he was actually working amongst them, instead of delighting to represent the first believers as merely poor creatures who huddled together for warmth out of the cold of an ungenial world? Let him be sure that Christians could never do without this dream. The belief in it may have been a proof of weakness, but it was their strength and life. So it has been down the ages. Genuine Christianity has not been a socialism based upon the infinite sweetness of loving, but the conviction that God has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Present aspirations have evidently conspired with his historical studies to prompt our author's conclusions. His own ideal religion has been the lamp by which he has contemplated the Christianity which made its way in the first century. No one can believe in 'religion' more devoutly than M. Renan, no one can place his hopes more entirely in the increase of religion. Religion and the progress of humanity are indissolubly associated in his mind. But he knows no object of the religious sentiment more personal or more fatherly than the good, the beautiful, and the true. 'To love God,' with him, is 'to find truth, to create beauty, to do good.' He apprehends that, if the force of our humanity were

increased tenfold, 'man would be absolutely religious, rapt into perpetual adoration, passing (roulant) from ecstasy into ecstasy,—born, living, and dying in a torrent of enjoyment (naissant, vivant, et mourant dans un torrent de volupté).'[1] All forms and symbols of religion are destined to be rejected in their turn. In the present time he exhorts those who may share his views to conform in silence to the religious system in which they find themselves:—

> The good Bishop Colenso has done a deed of honesty such as the Church has not seen from its beginning in writing down his doubts as soon as they occurred to him. But the humble Catholic priest, amongst a timid and narrow-minded population, ought to keep silence. Oh, in what discreet tombs round village churches, are thus buried poetic reserves, angelic silences! . . . . Let us enjoy the liberty of the children of God; but let us beware of becoming accomplices in that loss of virtue which would threaten our societies if Christianity were to grow feeble.[2]

'Let us remain in our respective churches.' Did M. Renan, when he wrote these exhortations, remember what he had said of a similar policy, as practised eighteen centuries ago? The maxim, 'Sua cuique civitati religio est, nostra nobis,' was one of the 'fort jolis mots'

[1] P. 385. [2] Pp. lxii. lxiii.

with which enlightened unbelievers mocked the religions of their day. 'They enunciated openly *the immoral system* that religious faiths are only good for the people, and *ought to be kept up for their benefit.* A very useless precaution! for the faith of the people was itself profoundly shaken.'[1] When 'the immoral system' of keeping up an unreal profession of the Christian religion for the sake of its good moral influence is openly inculcated by an unbeliever upon the priests of our Christian communities, it may lead us to ask ourselves whether it is either wise or generous to persecute the man who, like Bishop Colenso, ingenuously exposes his doubts, as the worst enemy of the faith.

To cultivate the religious sentiment by the help of a false rehearsing of creeds and an unmeaning enactment of ceremonies will be impossible, let us hope, to English Christians. We cannot adore simply because the sensation of adoring is a pleasant one. If we are to worship, we must know and believe in One who can rightly claim the homage of our hearts. Whether there exists such a Being or not, is the question of questions for us. Either conviction, that he is or that he is not, will exer-

[1] P. 341.

cise an incalculable influence upon our other opinions. The knowledge of God claims to stand in some form at the beginning as well as at the end of our inquiries. How we come to believe in a Father in heaven, who can say? We cannot begin from miracles; we cannot begin from the letter of an infallible book. Any such method turns out to be arbitrary and unreal. It is most true, indeed, that the records of the life of Jesus have proved in countless instances their power to unveil God to the minds of men; but then the God who is unveiled justifies and sustains those records. The true order, both logical and spiritual, is not, first miracles, then the Divinity of Jesus, then the existence of the heavenly Father; but, faith in a righteous Being first, then the incarnation and the resurrection of the Son of God, then the mighty works of Jesus and of the Spirit. If we cling fast to the confession of One above who cares for his human creatures, it will scarcely seem unnatural to us that he should send his Son into the world, or that he should raise him from the dead. It will be incredible to us that Jesus and his disciples should have built up, by a mixture of delusion and imposture, the most stupendous fiction in

human history. Starting from our trust in a true and loving Creator, we shall apply a spiritual *calculus* to the problems which concern us as spiritual creatures. We shall contemplate the Gospel as a whole, and estimate it by its relations to God and to man. We call the unbeliever to witness that it is at least a consoling dream, an inspiring idea. But we do not believe that the imagination of man is capable of creating better things than God has provided for those who love him. We hold, with our forefathers in the kingdom of God, that the idea is a revelation, that the dream is the most solid of realities.

ERASTUS AND EXCOMMUNICATION.[1]

NOT long ago I saw, in some article treating of the relations of Church and State, an allusion to certain persons who were 'not ashamed to be called Erastians.' Perhaps not many, either of those who accept the name or of those who brand others with it as a stigma, have any more definite notion of what Erastianism means than that it represents an aversion to ecclesiastical government and a desire that the clergy should be controlled as far as possible by the civil law. It will be found interesting, I hope, to inquire, a little more particularly, what Erastus himself taught. It may be that, as Wilkes declared he was never a Wilkite, and it has been even said that Calvin was not a Calvinist, so the opinions suggested to some minds by the name Erastianism differ considerably from anything that Erastus advocated. Certainly it is so, if Erastianism denotes a theory that a State has any natural authority to prescribe what its citizens

[1] The *Contemporary Review*, November, 1871.

are to believe, or how they are to worship. Erastus taught nothing that struck his most religious contemporaries as extravagant, or that need seem extravagant to any sober Christian now. The only subject connected with Church government upon which Erastus wrote, was that of excommunication; and it is with express reference to this subject that he gives incidentally his opinions on the more general question of the relation of the ecclesiastical to the civil government. But the feeling he has expressed in this discussion is undoubtedly one which puts him out of harmony with those who chiefly use his name as a term of reproach. Those who desire that the Church should lord it over the State, and those who desire that the Church should consist only of voluntary associations of persons who happen to think alike on theological subjects, equally value the ordinance of excommunication. It is the Church's solemn mode of punishing the refractory, and it is the instrument for securing that the members of a voluntary Church shall continue to be men of one mind. And the Tract that made Erastus famous was an argument against excommunication.

The controversy between Erastus and Beza is referred to very briefly by Hooker in his preface;

and Hammond, in his Treatise of the Power of the Keys, answers Erastus at some length. But the only easily accessible book, I believe, from which the English reader may obtain any satisfactory knowledge of Erastus and his doctrine is a small volume published in 1844 as a controversial pamphlet by the late Dr. Robert Lee, containing a translation of the Theses on Excommunication, with a preface, in which he deals with the charge brought by the Free Church party against the Church of Scotland of being an Erastian Establishment. An English translation of his Theses had been previously published in 1659, but this I have not seen.

The reader will be glad to have a little information about Erastus himself, which may be introduced by one of Dr. Hammond's long-winded sentences, from which, however, I omit a long parenthesis :—

> For the view of the person, I shall say no more than that he was a Doctor of Physick, who, having fallen on an age when novelties were in fashion (. . . . .), thought it not unreasonable to step out of his profession, and offer to the world his *novelty* too ; and having in his own profession expressed in some particulars a *zeal*, which others of his faculty will affirm to have been *without knowledge* (as when he speaks of the preparation of *Stibium*, or *Crocus Metal-*

lorum, and the *Antimonian receipts*, he resolves that no man can *salvâ conscientiâ, with a safe conscience*, administer them, which yet every physician knows now by daily experience to be very useful), it will not be matter of wonder, if he committed the like mistake in the business of *Excommunication* (a medicine more out of the proper road of his studies) and conceived *that* a poisonous noxious *recipe* in the Church (judging, it seems, at a first view, that they which were most wicked needed rather to be united to the Church than driven from it), which the experience of all Christian Churches, and the advice of Christ Himself, as a *Physician* of *Souls*, have concluded to be very *harmless* and *medicinal*. I shall say no more of his person, but that he does not seem by his book to have considered much of *Divinity*, save only of this one head, and in order to that present controversy.[1]

This physician, whose name survives through a small theological work not published in his lifetime, was really distinguished in his profession. His name was originally Thomas Lieber, and was Grecized into Erastus after the pedantic fashion of his age. It was the period of the Reformation, and Lieber, born in 1524 at Baden in Switzerland, grew up in the studies and ways of thinking of the Reforming scholars of his day. He came to Basel as a youthful student some four years after Erasmus had ended his career

[1] Of the Power of the Keys, c. iv., sec. 30.

in that city. He was a child of seven years when Zwingli fell on the field of Cappel, and he became the friend and correspondent of Bullinger, Zwingli's successor at Zürich. He was thus the contemporary of the second generation of German and Swiss Reformers. But having chosen the practice of medicine for his profession, he devoted himself with enthusiasm to medical studies. From Basel he went to the university of Bologna, probably as having the highest reputation at that time for the scientific study of physic, and is said to have spent as much as nine years in Italy, 'in the company of the most famous and expert physicians' of that country. During the prime of his life he was at Heidelberg, professor of physic at the University, and principal physician and counsellor to Frederick the Elector, Prince Palatine. In the year 1564, when he was forty years of age, Erastus was added by his prince to a company of divines who were to carry on a controversy at Maulbronn with some Wittenberg theologians concerning Christ's Presence in the Lord's Supper. From Heidelberg he returned to Basel, and gave his labour and affection to the University of his early studies. He died on the last day of the year 1583, and was thus described

on his tombstone—'Acutus philosophus, elegans medicus, sincerus theologus, Heidelbergensis Academiæ columen, Basiliensis lumen; cui nutritia sua liberaliter rependit; doctis piisque amabilis.'

This epitaph appears to do him no more than justice. Not a man of genius or a great discoverer, Erastus was a shrewd and independent inquirer. Melchior Adam, in his book, 'De Vitis Germanorum Medicorum,' thus characterises him :—

He was most diligent in making inquest into the virtues of medicaments; and most gravely resolved, that those physicians must be deceived that trust without trial. [Dr. Hammond, as quoted above, ought evidently to have spoken of his *caution*, not of his "zeal without knowledge."] Whence he was happy in his practice, and, by the help of God's grace, cured many that were heavily diseased of dropsies, epilepsies, gouts, and other maladies counted incurable. Neither had he any man's authority in such esteem, that it could move him to depart from what was evident to sense, or agreeable to reason; but he always judged, that truth was to be taken from the matter itself, and not from authority. He refuted judicial astrology in divers writings yet extant; and refuted Paracelsism in a treatise and other disputations: yet doth not condemn, but commend, lawful chemistry.

To the same effect speaks De Thou in his history :—

> This year was closed with the death of Thomas Erastus, born at Baden in Switzerland, who, constantly walking in the solid truth, and not so much in the principles delivered by ancients of both the sciences, was famous in this age for his knowledge of philosophy and physic.

The spirit and method thus attributed to him may be discerned in the Theses and the 'Confirmatio Thesium.' We perceive at once that we have to do, not with a pedant, but with an original inquirer. As a theologian, Erastus is manifestly independent, but he is also cautious, logical, lucid, modest, and reverent. It is a singular relief to pass from the verbose and pompous disquisitions of the learned theologian, Dr. Hammond, to the pages in which the scientific layman gives so concisely the results of his non-professional inquiry.

Our Anglican divines, Hooker and Hammond, remind us that Erastus was not dealing with the Episcopal system of Church government, and they are willing to admit that he makes out a strong case against excommunication by Presbyterian courts. It is necessary to bear in mind the conditions with reference to which he wrote,

although they narrow, perhaps disappointingly, the scope of his argument. He has in his eye the Reformed Churches of the Palatinate and of Switzerland. Writing in the year 1568, he says, in a preface to the reader:—

About sixteen years ago, some persons were seized with a certain fever of excommunication (which they dignified with the title of ecclesiastical discipline, and affirmed to be holy and enjoined by God upon the Church), and were exceedingly desirous of rubbing the infection of it into the whole Church. The method of it, they said, was that certain Elders should sit in the name of the whole Church, and judge who were worthy and who unworthy, to come to the Lord's Supper. I wondered that they should agitate this matter at a time when we had neither persons to be excommunicated nor fit excommunicators. For scarcely a thirtieth part of the people understood and approved our doctrine; all the rest were very hostile to us; so that no one of any understanding could fail to see that a dangerous schism of the multitude would be the consequence of such a scheme. Therefore it did not seem to me the time for inquiring, how some might be expelled from the fellowship of the Church; I thought it on the contrary our business to consider how the greatest number might be drawn to the knowledge of the truth and included within the Church. Those, again, who would have had to preside, were neither in age and experience, nor in ability and judgment, nor in character and authority, so superior to

the rest, that they seemed likely to perform so grave a task with dignity.

Erastus proceeds to explain that at first his only doubt was as to the right manner and time of putting in force the discipline of excommunication; but being thus led to examine the question, when he had consulted the early Christian writers, the schoolmen, and later authorities, he found more and more reason for doubting about the whole matter. He determined, therefore, to look carefully for himself into the Holy Scriptures. And the results of his examination he embodied in Theses, which he circulated in manuscript amongst the Protestant divines of the Continent.

The Theses were thus read by many, though they were not published or printed, and amongst others by Beza, who wrote a reply to them, and sent it to Erastus in August, 1569. It was in answer to Beza's tract that Erastus wrote his 'Confirmatio Thesium,' which was finished at the end of the same year. This also was circulated in manuscript; and both it and the Theses remained unpublished until the year 1589, five years after Erastus's death. A volume was then issued, 'Pesclavii, apud Baocium Sultaceterum,' in which the publisher announces that

he had bought the MSS. from Erastus's heirs, and which contains, besides the Theses and the Confirmatio, several excellent letters from Bullinger, Walther, and others, in which they express a general agreement with the views of Erastus.

The title of the Theses is as follows:—'A Discussion of the very serious Question, whether Excommunication, in so far as it Debars Professing Christians from the Sacraments on account of Ill-doing, rests on a Divine Command, or is a Human Invention.' Erastus explains repeatedly that his controversy is with those who desire, in professed obedience to Scripture, to set up a presbyteral court, distinct from the civil courts of the country, which shall exercise a censorship of morals, and shall use exclusion from the Lord's Supper as the penalty for moral offences. The issue, as I have observed, is thus strictly defined by Erastus himself. His appeal is almost exclusively to Holy Scripture, because those whom he was opposing professed to be absolutely bound by its authority. Speaking of a certain agreement between Beza and Peter Lombard, he says to Beza—'Verum Lombardo cæterisque scholasticis absque Scripturis licuit loqui: tibi, qui diversum profiteris, non licet.' He excludes the case of heresy, which was not

then under consideration. He treats of no kind of excommunication but that which was inflicted formally by the sentence of a court, and which consisted in exclusion from the Lord's Supper.

Like his fellow-Protestants, Erastus held Scripture to be Scripture, in whatever part of the Bible he found it. In days when the principle of gradual revelation was little recognised, the appeal to Scripture was embarrassed by the continual uncertainty whether a particular precept, or institution, or example, were of permanent authority or not. In a dispute in which both parties appeal to the authority of the Bible as absolute, may a text out of Genesis, or Leviticus, or Ezra, or Malachi, or the Apocalypse, be adduced to settle a controversy, or not? The debatableness of this point has caused a great waste and confusion of argument in Protestant theologians.

Erastus refers at some length to the Old Testament, as he had every right to do in dealing with theologians of the Geneva school. In the principal centres of the Reformation, the change of religion had been carried out by the civil Governments. The rulers of the land, converted and guided by preachers, had reformed religion, as a solemn duty which they owed to

God and Christ. Luther at Wittenberg, Zwingli at Zürich, Calvin at Strasburg and Geneva, Œcolampadius and others at Basel, were the advisers of the sovereign prince, or of the magistrates of the Commonwealth. Now, though the Reformers drew their theology from the epistles of the New Testament, the age of those scriptures gave them no example of a Christian or godly government. The Old Testament, on the other hand, which their controversial theory placed on a par with the New, was the book of a holy nation. There they saw judges and kings enforcing the divine commands in matters of faith and worship. It was natural, therefore, that the Reformers should be continually referring to Old Testament rules and precedents. Erastus was himself the counsellor of a Christian prince, who desired to govern according to the will of God. What did Holy Scripture say as to the best constitution for a state thus governed? It affirmed that the Jewish order and laws were the wisest and most salutary in the world.

Accordingly, Erastus argues, that is the best constitution of a Church which comes nearest to the Jewish form. But amongst the Jews it was never ordained that there should be two different jurisdictions over morals—the civil and the ecclesiastical. What, then, hinders that now also a Church to which

the merciful God has given a Christian Magistrate, should be content with a single government?

The double jurisdiction to which Erastus demurs is most completely illustrated by the system introduced by Calvin at Geneva. It was the duty of the civil magistrate, according to Calvin, to put down all immorality, and to exterminate erroneous beliefs; and it was also the duty of the Church power to direct *its* punishments against the same offences. In the Confession drawn up by Calvin, when he was first appointed pastor at Geneva in 1536, he claims for the Church, to be administered by its authority—

> The punishment of excommunication, which we hold to be a sacred and salutary weapon in the hands of believers, so that the wicked, by their evil conversation, may not corrupt the good and dishonour Christ. We hold that it is expedient and according to the ordinance of God that all open idolaters, blasphemers, murderers, thieves, adulterers, and false witnesses, all seditious and quarrelsome persons, slanderers, pugilists, drunkards, and spendthrifts, if they do not amend their lives after they have been duly admonished, shall be cut off from communion with believers until they have given satisfactory proof of repentance.

So that the same person, for the same fault, would be liable to be tried by a civil court

wielding its penalties of fine or imprisonment or death, and by a Consistory wielding its penalty of excommunication. Erastus contends that one jurisdiction, that of the State, is sufficient, and that the Holy Communion ought not to be used as an engine of punishment.

He has no difficulty in showing that the punishment of excommunication has no place in the Levitical Code or the Jewish institutions. The wicked are not excluded by any ordinance from the Passover or the temple worship. Certain persons are excluded; but they are the ceremonially unclean, not evil livers. And the ceremonial uncleanness cannot be understood to typify sin in such a sense that we are to infer, from the exclusion of the unclean, the duty of excommunicating sinners:

Moses would have been openly at variance with himself if, while intimating through types that certain persons were to be debarred, he had, in fact, admitted those same persons to the Temple and to worship. For it is undeniable that no one was shut out from the Tabernacle and from the company of others on account of viciousness of conduct, if he had incurred no legal impurity by touching a dead body or otherwise. So that Moses would have punished those wearing the figure of the unclean, and would have left the actually unclean (so far as this punishment is concerned) unpunished. Thus he would at the

same time have denied and affirmed the same thing.[1]

It had been argued that the putting out of the synagogue, of which we read in the New Testament, was the Jewish form of excommunication. But Erastus contends[2] that the proper analogue of exclusion from the Lord's Supper can only be exclusion from the Passover and the temple worship; and we see that even those who were put out of the synagogue were not hindered from coming to the temple or offering sacrifices. He refers also to the scourging in the synagogues; and argues that there was a kind of local administration of justice in these assemblies upon those who made themselves obnoxious to the rulers—a different thing from the debarring of men on account of moral unworthiness from sacraments. He might perhaps have admitted that the excommunicatory impulse, not likely to have been wanting in the Jews of our Lord's time, had found vent in the practice of putting men out of the synagogue, *because* there was no place for it in the ancient law of worship. He further shows that our Lord nowhere expressed any opinion in favour of shutting out wicked persons from the sacra-

[1] Thesis xv. [2] Thesis xxii.

mental worship of the Jews; on the contrary, he allowed Judas Iscariot to partake of the Passover. And he concludes the appeal to Jewish precedent in these words :—

As God commanded all the circumcised outwardly to participate in the same sacraments and ceremonies, but appointed that the wicked should be restrained and punished with the sword and other penalties; so amongst us now it is the will of Christ that all baptized persons or Christians, holding right and pure doctrine, should use the same outward ceremonies and sacraments, but that the immoral should be punished by the magistrate with death, exile, imprisonment, and other such penalties.[1]

Coming to what the Apostles taught when the Church had been founded, Erastus is able to make out a strong case in support of his view. On the one hand, in the many rebukes and threatenings of unworthy Christians, there is never any intimation that they ought to be excluded from the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, in the chapters[2] in which St. Paul specially discusses the Communion of the Lord's Supper, he assumes that persons are present at this sacrament who, under no theory of excommunication, could well have escaped being excommunicated. For example, he com-

[1] Thesis xxxi. [2] Cor. x., xi.

plains of Christians who eat openly of sacrifices offered to idols; and these are communicants. In this passage, says Erastus,

Paul proves that those persons no less declared by that act of theirs that they were partners, κοινωνούς, of devils, than they testified by joining in the Lord's Supper that they were members of the mystical body of Christ.[1]

Again :—

In the following chapter, speaking of those who cause divisions, and of those who drink to excess in the very celebration of the Supper, he does not order that they should be debarred from coming to it. There is not a word of such interdiction; whereas he suggests much humbler corrections, as that each should eat at home. How could he have failed in this place to speak of excommunication if he had approved of it and thought it necessary to the Church? The Apostle knew that the law bade otherwise, and that the use of Sacraments in the Church was other than to be refused for the punishment of moral faults. Therefore he bids that each man should examine himself; he does not enjoin that some should examine others. He besides exhorts all to study to eat worthily, lest any eat judgment to himself. By no means does he bid that those who eat unworthily should be repelled, but he threatens them with the chastisement of the Lord. He divides them that eat into two classes—those who eat worthily and those

[1] Thesis xxxiii.

who eat unworthily; he does not bid that either should *not* eat, but he desires that all should eat worthily.[1]

The latter and larger portion of the Tract is occupied with a very thorough examination of the difficult passage which is relied upon as their main scriptural support by the advocates of the discipline of excommunication—St. Matthew, xviii. 15-18. Here, it is affirmed, excommunication is ordained by our Lord himself. The words are as follows: 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' What do we find here—asks Erastus, keeping to his point—of any ordaining of exclusion from the Lord's Supper as a judicial penalty for moral offences?

[1] Thesis xxxv.

He calls attention first to the fact that the question here is not of sins or crimes in general, but of private personal offences. This is obvious on the face of the passage, and it is confirmed by the question of Peter, which follows:[1] 'How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' He proceeds to give an interpretation of what is meant by 'the Church,' and by treating as a heathen and a publican, which he supports with acuteness and learning, but with which we may not be able altogether to concur. He expounds our Lord's direction thus:—

> When thy brother—that is, a Jew—does thee a wrong, do thou of thyself endeavour to effect a reconciliation with him. If thou dost not succeed by thyself, take two or three others and make the same attempt. If thou canst not even thus free thyself from the wrong, tell it to the congregation—that is, to the magistrate of thy own people or religion. If he refuse to listen to him also, thou mayest without any scandal proceed against him as thou wouldst against a publican or a heathen, who would refuse to be brought before any but a Roman tribunal.

In explaining what *the Church* was, he says:

> I take it for a principle and foundation, which I am confident all will approve, and which I do not know

[1] V. 21.

that anyone denies—that Christ is speaking of a Church which *then was*. For how could he have commanded his disciples to tell it to a Church which could nowhere be found, and of the constitution of which they had as yet heard nothing? If he had wished to found a new Church or a new form of government unknown to the Apostles, he would have been delivering to them an extremely defective institution. For he neither taught them who were *the Church*, nor from whom or how it was to be gathered, nor its mode of judging, nor penalties; nor did he speak of *all* sins, as I have shown, and as even those who build excommunication on this passage are compelled to admit, when they openly state that this passage relates only to private sins. . . . . Thus much, I think, all will readily grant us, that Christ spoke concerning a Church then existing in the world or in Judæa; but opinions begin to differ when it is asked, What Christ understood here by the name *Church?*

Erastus argues that it could not mean the whole population, but was used for the Sanhedrim or other judicial authority of the Jews, insisting that our Lord had no plan for altering the form of administration or government then in force.

Two objections, he says, may be brought against this view:—(1) How could anyone *refuse* to hear the Church if *the Church* be a magistracy? and (2) How does what is said of binding and loosing agree with this interpretation? To the first question an answer

has been already given—that the Jews had not at that time the power of judging about all matters, but almost all disputes that did not concern religion came before Roman Courts. In these matters, then, if any one disregarded the authority of the Sanhedrim, Christ allows the injured party to prosecute his cause in the Gentile courts, as if the offender were a Gentile or a publican. . . . . The answer to the other objection is equally easy. . . . . To bind and to loose signify no other thing than to entreat the brother to desist from the wrong and to act piously, seeing that this is pleasing to God, and that God will punish him if he act against his command. He who dissuades a brother, holding out to him the pleasure and the anger of God, from committing a wrong, if he succeeds, has gained him ; that is, looses him : if he does not succeed, the wrath of God remains on him. . . . . It will never be proved from the sacred writings that *to bind* means to exclude professing Christians from the receiving of the Sacraments, or that *to loose* means to readmit to the Sacraments those who have been excluded on account of immorality, and so to graft them in again, as it were, into the Church.

I add some extracts from the concluding Theses :—

'The Apostle,' they say, 'requires us to shun the wicked, so far as not even to partake of a common meal with them, much less could he desire that we should unite with the same persons in celebrating the Lord's Supper.' I deny the inference. For there is a very great difference between the prohibition of

private familiarity and the refusing of the Sacraments, and the one does not necessarily go with the other. The former is a kind of civil penalty, the latter a religious. The former is enjoined upon us, the latter is not. The end and reason of the former are expounded by St. Paul, the end and reason of the latter we nowhere find described. And that the one might be inflicted without the other is proved by the conduct of the Pharisees; for they, wishing as they did to appear holier than other men, had no intercourse with the publicans. (Whether all others, as well as the Pharisees, equally shunned them, I do not at present remember to have read.) But no one will ever be able to show that the publicans were excluded from the sacrifices, the temple, the Passover, and other sacraments, supposing that they had been circumcised and had not abandoned the Jewish religion. . . . . The Apostle commands the good to shun the company of the wicked, that these may be ashamed and repent. If one who has sinned thinks himself as much in favour with everyone as before, not only is he not reformed, but others are the more easily corrupted. Whereas if he sees that he is avoided, he cannot help considering why this is; and in his wish not to be hateful to those who loved him, he may take thought about amending his life. The case is totally different as regards being admitted to sacraments or repelled from them. For the frequent participation of these by no means so nourishes and confirms vices, as private familiarity does. For in the churches, where they are administered, there is no talk of private or frivolous matters, but the word of the Lord is set

forth. There when men hear that Christ died for them, and that for that benefit he demands that we should give public thanks, and that he is not a worthy guest who has not examined himself, but that all eat judgment to themselves who intrude themselves unworthily amongst the guests,—they who are proposing to come to the Lord's Table, whatever they may have been before, are compelled to consider what is done there, what God desires, and how they must henceforth order their life so as to please God. He who is deprived of this invitation is always made the worse and not the better.[1]

Do you then condemn, some may ask, so many holy bishops, who began soon after the Apostles' times to excommunicate notorious sinners? I answer that it is one thing to impugn a doctrine, another to condemn the man that holds it. In our own day many learned and godly men have examined and refuted the Catholic errors—so to call them—of the ancients; such as the *limbus* of the Fathers, the fire of purgatory, intercession of the saints, exorcism in baptism, celibacy of the clergy, unction in baptism and at death, prayers for the dead, and—pertaining to the present subject—satisfactions; and yet I never heard any of them accused as having therefore condemned the ancients. If they desired this Excommunication to be obtruded upon the Church as a law of God's appointment, I do not commend them; although in the meantime I do very much commend and approve their zeal and intention. For they were anxious by this means, when no more convenient

[1] Thesis lxvi.

method occurred to them, to restrain the frowardness of evil men. Most of them also, as we see to be done at the present day, followed a general and universally received custom ; nor did it ever come into their mind to inquire whether the practice was agreeable to Scripture or not.[1]

As regards the early history of excommunication, Erastus suggests that it arose naturally, when the government was heathen, through the desire of the Christians to restrain wickedness which was not otherwise punished ; and that, after the empire had become Christian, (when the judicial authority ought to have been given over to the civil ruler), it was continued by the bishops through a love of power, and through the growth of superstition with regard to the sacraments.

Where the government is Christian, Erastus cannot see why the system of the Jewish commonwealth should not be followed :—

Wherever the magistrate is godly and Christian, there is no need of any other to govern or punish under another name and title,—as if a godly magistrate differed nothing from a profane. It is a most mischievous error, as Wolfgang Musculus says, to regard the Christian magistrate in the same light as a profane government, whose power is only to be ac-

[1] Thesis lxix.

knowledged in profane matters. Therefore if the godly magistrate has received authority not only to settle religion according to the directions of Holy Scripture, and to arrange its ministries and offices—for which reason Moses requires the man chosen for king to transcribe with his own hand the book of the law or writings of Moses, and to exercise himself therein continually—but also to punish vices in the same manner, it is vain of some amongst us now to think of a new form of judgment, which would reduce the magistrate himself into the rank of subjects. An ecclesiastical tribunal to judge of *morals* (concerning *doctrine* the magistrate ought always to consult those who are more skilled in it) is nowhere to be found ordained in Holy Scripture.

But in those Churches which live under an ungodly government (for example Popish or Turkish) grave and pious men ought to be chosen, according to the Apostles' precept, to settle differences by arbitration, to compose quarrels, and do other offices of that sort. The same persons, together with the ministers, ought also to admonish and rebuke men of foul and impure lives; and if they do not succeed, they may, by refusal of private intercourse, or by a public reproof, or by some other such mark, punish them, or rather recall them to virtue; from the sacraments ordained of God, if they desire to come to them, they may not debar them. For who except God can judge of men's hearts? It may happen that by public preaching some spark may be kindled, which it may be not at all useless, but rather beneficial, to cherish by any means not inconsistent with piety. And how, I pray

you, can it be otherwise than absurd, and therefore impious, to debar from the solemn thanksgiving and commemoration of the Lord's death any man who feels impelled in his heart to celebrate the same with the Church, who declares that he wishes to be a member of the Church, and who desires to testify publicly that he is dissatisfied with his past life?[1]

With these words the Theses conclude. The extracts which I have given from them will serve to convey some impression of the general attitude and position of Erastus as a controversialist. I believe it is no more than justice to him to admit that he was led by his own serious studies and Christian instincts, as well as by his knowledge of mankind, to take up the right ground in an important matter, and that he held it with creditable courage and ability.

He was assailing a belief which, if it was an erroneous one, was certainly entitled to be called, in his own bold phrase, a *Catholicus error*. And it related to a question which in his day was a thoroughly practical one. It faced him in the Palatinate, and required his attention as a counsellor of his sovereign. Ought 'the Church' to assume a judicial censorship of morals, or not? The Church of

[1] Thesis lxxiv., lxxv.

Rome, throughout its whole dominion, claimed that censorship. The same right on behalf of the Church had been claimed with equal peremptory insistence by Calvin at Geneva. In England the old Catholic theory remained, subject in practice to some important new restrictions. The answer of Erastus was a twofold one: When the Government does not profess the same faith as the Church, the Church is bound to assume and administer a provisional censorship; but where the Government is Christian and reformed, the Church ought to have no independent and supreme tribunals, but to leave judicial inquiry and correction to the courts, whether they be called ecclesiastical or civil, over which the magistrate is ultimately supreme. The one instrument of punishment which the Church had at command was excommunication. If the Church was to punish, all religious societies were agreed it must do so by excommunicating; and to excommunicate meant, as its essence or chief part, to debar from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The proper power of the Church was to pronounce, You are adjudged, on this or the other count, to be an offender; your punishment is that you be forbidden to join with the

rest of the faithful in partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord. Against the exercise of such a function by the Church Erastus firmly and altogether protested.

He felt it to be both logically and practically necessary that in a well-ordered commonwealth there should be but one ultimate court of appeal —that of the sovereign. In the Third Book of the *Confirmatio Thesium*, in which he states most fully, and with the requisite qualifications, his theory of Church and State, he says that men are subject to two governments—the one, invisible and spiritual, that of God; the other, external, that of the commonwealth. He was not the man to suppose that 'God' stands for bishop, or synod, or church-meeting, as is assumed by so many interpreters of the answer, 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.' He places God and his authority above all men and all courts; but, for sentences and punishments in the visible sphere, he affirms that the head of the State must be supreme. The Papists, he says, saw with equal clearness that there could not be two supreme authorities in a society; and, as they held that the Church had an independent authority, they determined this to be

the more worthy, and subjected the State to the Church, the Sovereign to the Pope. Hence the saying, *Petra dedit Petro, Petrus diadema Rodolpho.* If the Church is not to exercise judicial authority over the State, the State must ultimately control the administration of the Church.

But, says Erastus, as in the care of secular matters the magistrate is not free to transgress the bounds and limits of equity, justice, and honesty—that is, the prescription of the laws and statutes of the commonwealth—so, in ordering sacred matters, or such as relate to divine worship, he is still less free to depart in any particular from the prescription of God's Word, which he ought to follow as a rule in all things, and nowhere to diverge a hair's breadth from it. The sum is that, in a Christian commonwealth, there is one magistrate, to whom God has committed the external government of all things which belong either to civic life or to godly and Christian life; that the right and authority to rule and to judge has not been granted to ministers or to any other persons. This must be understood to be said of a commonwealth in which the magistrate and the subjects profess the same religion, and that the true one. In this, I say, there ought not to be two distinct jurisdictions. In a commonwealth in which the magistrate holds a false creed, the division of governments may perchance, in some sort of way, appear endurable.[1]

[1] Pp. 161, 162.

Both in estimating Erastus and his doctrine, and in trying to form an opinion, as Churchmen of to-day, whether we are now suffering loss from the disuse of excommunication, it is important that we should recognise distinctly the overwhelming ecclesiastical authority which may be adduced in favour of the practice. From about the close of the second century the system of Church discipline which uses excommunication as its main penalty began to grow with a fertility which it is amazing to contemplate. No one doubted that Christ had ordained, as a thing necessary to the life and health of the Church, that those who were unfit or unworthy to be partakers of the holy mysteries should be debarred by judicial authority from approaching them. Heretics agreed with Catholics in accepting with readiness the painful obligation of excommunicating. 'A certain excommunicatory fever,' to use Erastus's phrase, seems to have become a chronic affection of the Church. Indeed, those who have once learnt to regard excommunication as a solemn duty, have started on a line on which it is difficult to stop. If the Communion is only for the worthy, how many are to be thought worthy? I have heard that at the infrequent Communions of the Scottish

Kirk, it is a part of the minister's duty to warn the congregation of the danger of communicating unworthily, or to 'fence the Table;' and that this duty is sometimes discharged with such vigour and impressiveness, that none at all respond to the subsequent invitation: whereupon the minister is obliged to undo some of his former work, on pain of being without communicants. But if the theory of fencing the Lord's Table or the mysteries be once adopted, can a straightforward mind easily find a limit at which to stop in defining unworthiness? Again, if exclusion from the sacred rites of the Church be a wholesome instrument of castigation against sin, what inducements there must be to make a liberal use of it! It cannot be for want of sin to punish that the ecclesiastical disciplinarian must hold his hand. Accordingly, we seem to see Council emulating Council, and bishop outrunning bishop, in putting this ordinance in force to protect the purity of the Church. Practically the discipline was mitigated by Christian feeling and humanity and good sense, but the mitigation seemed to be at the cost of some unfaithfulness to sterner duty. There is a sermon of St. Chrysostom against anathematizing, in which he uses some excellent Christian arguments, and concludes,

That we ought only to anathematize the impious and heretical opinions of men, but to spare their persons, and to pray for their salvation. But this doctrine has been thought by some so strange in a Father of the Church, that they have made a question, without any other reason for the doubt, whether this be one of St. Chrysostom's genuine discourses; and 'Sixtus Senensis and Habertus' try to persuade themselves, with no more reason, that he speaks only against *private men's* using the anathema against heretics.[1] Yet Chrysostom was not repudiating excommunication, but only the 'execration' into which, in some hands, it was developed.

The account given by Bingham, in the sixteenth book of his well-known work, of the discipline of the Ancient Church, shows strikingly how large and important a place in the life and in the literature of the Church was occupied by its system of punishment. It may be convenient to remind the reader of the different grades of exclusion—

The lesser excommunication consisted in excluding men from the participation of the Eucharist. Of this there were two degrees—the one excluding them only

[1] See Bingham's 'Antiquities of the Christian Church,' b. xvi. c. ii.

from the Eucharist, but allowing them to pray with the faithful, and the other excluding them from the prayers of the faithful, and only allowing them to pray with the catechumens; but neither of them expelling such delinquents totally from the communion of the Church. The greater excommunication was when men were totally expelled the Church, and separated from all communion in holy offices with her.

This was understood and declared to involve absolute social separation as well. 'It was the greatest curse that could be laid upon man. The use of this discipline first grew into a system, as Erastus pointed out, when the civil government was heathen and immoral; but it did not decline when the government became Christian. It grew in spite of the difficulties by which the theory and practice of it were embarrassed. It aimed at the purity of the Church; it allied itself with sacerdotal power and ambition; it was believed by every Father and theologian to have been positively enjoined by our Lord himself. It lived, therefore, over great abuses and anomalies in its administration in the earlier ages; and when men were put under 'the greatest curse that could be laid upon man' for omitting to pay the fees of a court, or for not observing some trumpery rule, though wise men felt that mistakes had been made, they were hardly

shaken in their belief that *some* sinners ought by *some* Church authority to be judicially excluded from the Communion of the Lord's Supper.

Reformers, of the type and school of Calvin, made it a point of religious honour to be more strict in their conditions of communion than the Papal Church. They were full of zeal against vice, and they cherished a high standard of religious purity in doctrine and life. Calvin held, as we have seen, 'the punishment of excommunication to be a sacred and salutary weapon in the hands of believers, so that the wicked by their evil conversation may not corrupt the good and dishonour Christ.' Having been expelled from Geneva in 1538, in consequence of dissensions arising about this very matter of excommunication, Calvin writes :—

> Whenever I think how wretched I was in Geneva I tremble throughout my whole being: when I had to administer the sacrament I was tortured by anxiety for the state of the souls of those for whom I should one day have to render an account before God; there were many whose faith seemed to me uncertain, nay doubtful, and yet they all thronged to the table of the Lord without distinction. I cannot tell you with what torments my conscience was beset day and night.

How, we may well ask, with this assumption of responsibility, could he ever escape such tor-

ments? But when he was invited back to Geneva, he took the pastorate on his own terms, and the Lord's table was carefully and rigorously fenced. Beza, succeeding Calvin, was Erastus's chief opponent. To him, as to Calvin, a Church which did not uncompromisingly exclude the unworthy from Communion was a dead unfaithful Church. On the other hand, Erastus was cordially supported by the pastors of the Zürich Church—Bullinger, Walther, and Wolf. In the admirable letters written by the two former, both to Erastus and to Beza, they declare themselves as agreeing decidedly with Erastus against Beza. These letters are full of Christian wisdom, and marked especially by reverence for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The Church of England, true to that compromising policy for which it has been so abundantly commended and reproached, is on both sides in this controversy. In theory, it partly goes with the ecclesiastical tradition and with the Calvinists; in practice, it may be called wholly Erastian. The constitution of Church and State in this country does not allow an independent and irresponsible ecclesiastical jurisdiction over morals; a bishop cannot at his

discretion excommunicate a sinner or a heretic. The sovereign is over all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, supreme. So far, even as regards theory, the Church of England is Erastian. But in theory that judicial exclusion from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which Erastus deprecated, is still a part of our appointed discipline. The curate is directed by the introductory rubrics of our Communion Service to repel obstinate offenders from the Holy Communion.

> Provided that every minister so repelling any . . . . shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest; and the ordinary shall proceed against the offending person according to the canon.

The thirty-third Article pronounces—

> That person which by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church and excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole multitude of the faithful as an heathen and publican, until he be openly reconciled by penance, and received into the Church by a judge that hath authority thereunto.

The canons of 1603 begin with frightful excommunicatory vigour, cutting off dissentients on the right hand and on the left. After the first canon, the eleven next end with the following

formula: 'Let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not restored but only by the archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of those his wicked errors.' Ministers are required by Canons xxvi., xxvii., xxviii., to be very strict in refusing the Communion to offending persons; and churchwardens, by the eighty-fifth, to see that all persons excommunicated and so denounced be kept out of the Church. But, practically, the necessity of proceeding in public courts of the realm has killed the custom of excommunication. That half of Erastianism has given us the benefit of a whole Erastianism in practice. No one in the Church of England at the present day ever hears or thinks of judicial excommunication. But the Church is not free from reproaches on this score. High Churchmen sigh over the loss of the ancient discipline, and are ashamed that the clergy can no longer pretend to rule with the ecclesiastical rod, and dream of the time when erroneous and strange doctrines may again be promptly banished and driven away in the persons of those who profess them, and proud sinners be constrained by salutary fears to put their necks under the foot of the Church. Our supposed laxity is an equal stumbling-block to the Evangelical Dissenters,

whose theory of a Church is that it consists exclusively of converted or regenerate men. A Church, according to their idea, ought to be perpetually keeping itself pure by exclusion and rejection. No wonder that they shake their heads at a public Church which does not know how to define its own members, and cannot say who are in it and who are out of it.

To intimidate and repress immorality, and to cherish the purity of the Church, are undeniably excellent aims, and obligatory on all Christians; and if the discipline of excommunication were a Divinely appointed or successful method of pursuing them, we could hardly excuse ourselves for not labouring to recover it. If we venture to believe it to be a *Catholicus error* to trust to excommunication, we ought to propose to ourselves other ways of seeking the same ends. I conclude, therefore, with a summary statement of the chief objections to judicial excommunication, and of the better modes of action to be used in its place.

(1.) In the first place, the discipline of exclusion from the holy communion is not ordained in Scripture. This was Erastus's chief contention; and I do not think that any competent critic would deny that he has fairly made out

his case. The allegation continues to be an important one; for when the advocates of the discipline find themselves involved in practical difficulties, they fall back upon the supposed command of God or ordinance of Christ. Bingham may serve as an example, who says, 'The difficulty of restoring the ancient discipline in the present posture of affairs is certainly great, but not insuperable; for discipline is one of God's ordinances in his Church, and he appoints nothing but what is practicable in itself, if men be not wanting on their part to contribute toward the exercise of it.'[1] But what if it be *not* ordained—in the sense of having been enjoined by Christ or practised by the Apostles? Now, as to the testimony of Scripture, not only may it be shown that the texts usually quoted in its favour do not unambiguously enjoin the discipline, but most weighty and conclusive evidence may be brought forward on the other side.

(2.) Secondly, this discipline fosters a kind of sacerdotal power and action which has never been found wholesome in its relation either to religion or to politics. In Episcopal churches the excommunicating authority is absolutely sacerdotal; in other communions it may be

[1] 'Antiquities,' b. xv. c. ix. sec. 8.

loosely described as quasi-sacerdotal. To give to ecclesiastics the power to refuse the ordinances of religion to those whom they may judge to be unworthy, is the most direct way to promote priestcraft and superstition. It is no reproach against an order that it does not do well what it is not properly called to do; and all history and experience tend to prove that ecclesiastics, as such, do not discharge judicial functions to the general advantage. Their own power becomes identified in their minds with the cause of religion; and in order to increase their power they are tempted to encourage slavish notions about the Divine ordinances. The rule of priests is fatally injurious to religion as well as to freedom. In voluntary religious associations, democratically governed, excommunication may be nothing more serious than the extrusion of the few by the many; but neither is this kind of 'discipline' attractive to the Christian eye. To call ecclesiastical action 'spiritual' may be the grossest misnomer; very frequently it is the action of the State that is more truly spiritual, whilst that of the Church is carnal.[1]

(3.) Thirdly, *it does not work well.* There is no clear agreement as to its proper scope. The

[1] 1 Cor. iii.

practical working of the discipline of excommunication, in its bearing on Christian life, has always been tentative, arbitrary, and confused. The highest authorities in the primitive times appear to have held that only great and flagrant offences should be punished with excommunication; that none but outward and proved actions were to be thus visited; that there ought to be no pretence on the part of the Church of judging the heart, which could be known to God only. But who could be enthusiastic about excommunicating known murderers and adulterers? The moment excommunication begins to be interesting, it is met by baffling difficulties. Let any try to devise *rules* for it; he will probably after some experiments confess with Bingham, 'To give rules in this case is a nice and tender point, and I had rather it should be done by the wisdom of others than myself.' It must be the inevitable tendency of any conceivable system of Church discipline to put the stamp of approval on outward propriety, and to castigate outward lapses. This is a weakness inherent in law, and need not confuse our moral judgment. We all know that the convict in the dock may be less guilty in the sight of God than the judge who has sentenced him. But in the excommunicatory

discipline, Law is usurping the functions of the Spirit, and is sure to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live. 'Persons are not always corrected by being excommunicated,' as Erastus says; 'nay, they may be made great hypocrites; and under that guise they are much more harmful than others who are undissemblingly wicked. There is no animal under the sun more hateful to God and all in heaven than a hypocrite.'[1] The Zürich pastors speak touchingly of the risk of quenching the real penitence of some heart-broken sinner by formally excluding him from the places where he might have heard of the Divine love and forgiveness. A mind trained in the school of Christ will surely recoil from a method of judgment which, in the name of God, justifies the Pharisee and drives away the publican and sinner. It is a wonder that Christian thought has not been oftener arrested by that phrase—'Let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican.' In every formulary, in every page of divinity, relating to excommunication, this direction is quoted. And it appears to have been seldom asked by readers of the parable, 'Two men went up into the temple to

[1] 'Confirmatio,' Book vi.

pray,' *how* heathens and publicans were treated by Christ and his disciples. We might understand our Lord to say, 'Of such a one, assume in word and in act that he is ignorant of, and grievously needs to know, the grace of the Father and the reconciliation wrought by the Son,' as if he were a heathen or a publican;' and not so interpret this one dictum as to make it a flat contradiction to all the teaching and all the behaviour of his life. It is a most impressive fact, that the one passage on which the practice of excommunication has been built up is one which, rightly understood, emphatically denounces it.

(4.) Lastly, it *lowers* the sacrament of Holy Communion. This point is repeatedly urged by Erastus and his Zürich friends. They do not like the Communion being made an instrument of penal discipline. It is evident, indeed, that the tender and reverent atmosphere which should brood over the partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord would be disturbed by the element of castigation. To a pastor holding high views of the sacrament, it must be painful to preside over a gate of admission, and to have to say to his flock, *You* may come in, you others are unworthy and must be kept out.

Those who, with the ideal of a pure Church before their minds, have studied the theory and practice of excommunication as a means of promoting purity, must have been haunted by misgivings such as are thus candidly confessed by Peter Martyr:—

> Hæc de excommunicatione dicere volui, semper meliora paratus audire. Multa enim hâc de re obscura esse video, quæ sæpe infirmiores impediunt, atque hoc vehementer doleo, quod de utopia et republicâ Platonis mihi videor locutus; quæ licet ut pulchra a multis laudentur, nullibi tamen reperiuntur.

But are there not more hopeful ways of striving after the same ideal? The following, at least, are open to us:—

1. We may endeavour to repress vice by the action of law. There are limits to what laws can do for the restraining of immorality, and it is an old delusion to hope that society may be made virtuous by legislation. But the question *how much* may be contributed by law towards this end, depending as it does on varying conditions, needs to be continually reconsidered. It can only be determined for each generation by a mixture of experiment and good sense. There is reason to hope that at this present time much might be accomplished by well-

considered enactments for the further diminution of drunkenness, fornication, gambling, theft, violence, mendicancy; and it is very desirable that Christian earnestness and faith should be thrown into the studies and efforts undertaken with that view.

2. We may make cautious use of reproof, in word and act. There are limits to this mode, also, of contending against vice. Judgment and tact are necessary in reproving sin and discountenancing the sinner; otherwise, rumour may be rashly taken for fact, an impracticable censorship may be attempted, or weak folly may be treated as worse than self-regarding formalism. But social disapprobation is a most powerful deterrent, and we are responsible for making the most efficacious use of it against un-Christian conduct. It is a good rule to be more ready to rebuke sin in the rich than in the poor. The sixty-fifth Canon, enjoining the denunciation of offenders, adds well—'especially those of the better sort and condition.' At all times the loyal acknowledgment of a high Christian standard will be a practical reproof of self-indulgence and worldliness, a light exposing and putting to shame deeds of darkness.

3. On the part of the clergy, faithful preach

ing may do much to bring about the best kind of condemnation—*self*-condemnation. In the present day there is little occasion to warn profligate offenders against profaning the Lord's Supper. So far as the Holy Communion is concerned, the irreligious are in the habit of excommunicating themselves. But there is always need to insist on the inward penitence and devotion which alone befit partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ, and to show that communicant purity is the law and ideal of the whole Christian society. In every age the Christian minister, serving at the altar of Christ's sacrifice, is called to protest against the easy compromises by which the world seeks to reconcile itself with Christianity. It is his difficult task to bear a steady witness on behalf of true Christian brotherhood, and against all the tempers and practices which violate it. He must reprove, rebuke, exhort, without ceasing; for to endeavours of this kind no limit is set, until the perfection of the body of Christ be attained.

ON PAUPERISM AS PRODUCED BY WEALTH.[1]

'Il y avait à Jérusalem des riches et *par conséquent* des pauvres.'—Renan, *St. Paul*, p. 421.

IT is a patent fact that we have in this country, by the side of great and increasing wealth, a very distressing amount of pauperism. This fact is often commented upon as if the co-existence of these two opposites were something strange and abnormal. It was recently brought forward, for example, by Mr. Harcourt, in a speech at Oxford, as imperatively calling for a great reduction in the national expenditure. It seems, therefore, to have not been sufficiently observed by those who have given some attention to economic and social questions that the existence of a wealthy class and of rising prosperity in a country has a direct tendency to generate a certain amount of pauperism. A judicious reduction in the national expenditure might stimulate the increase of wealth, but it

[1] *Good Words*, April, 1872.

might possibly, on that very account, be accompanied by an increase rather than a decrease of pauperism. Accumulated wealth certainly tends for the most part to improve the condition of the poorer class; but it also exerts some influences which have the directly opposite tendency.

Pauperism, or the destitution which makes people seek relief from the rates or from charity, may be referred to the following proximate causes. Inability to work, or to do any work worth paying for, makes a large number of persons incapable of earning a living. This class includes the sickly, the aged, the very young, and widows with children dependent upon them. There is a second class of those who are out of work, because at a given time and place there is demand for the kind of labour which they have to offer. We may put together in a third class those who are thoroughly idle and will not work, and those who are perpetually losing their employment through drunkenness and other moral faults. Physical weakness, want of employment, and depravity, are the three immediate causes of pauperism.

The accumulation of new capital, and the consequent impulse given to production, have an obvious tendency to increase the demand

for labour, and so to diminish the number of destitute persons of the second class. The same causes tend also in some degree to diminish the number of the first class, which is immensely the largest. They may have some slight effect, by making work more various and more remunerative, and therefore more tempting, in reducing the pauperism of the third class. But we cannot expect that the highest degree of general prosperity should ensure to every one employment at all times and at all places; or that it should abolish sickness, or old age, or orphanage, or widowhood; or that it should make all the poor virtuous. Pauperism will be reduced to a minimum when there is the steadiest regularity of employment or an equivalent flexibility in turning from one kind of work to another; when idleness, and drunkenness, and dishonesty become rare; when the poor are prudent enough to look forward to the day of failing strength, and therefore to put by savings and practise insurance and delay marriage, and when they hold themselves bound to support their aged and their sick.

Now the abundance and increase of wealth are not entirely favourable to constancy of employment, or to the promotion of a sense of

responsibility amongst the poorer people. Without attempting anything like an exhaustive statement, I may specify some of the influences by which wealth unsettles both employment and character amongst the working classes.

1. The existing conditions of our prosperity make the transfer of industries from one place to another an easier thing than it used to be. Capital is now *mobilised* to an unprecedented degree; and new discoveries or improved means of locomotion may cause the rapid displacement of a manufacture or a trade. An increase of production will be the total result of such changes, but they may be at the same time attended with some local distress. Families cannot suddenly remove themselves to distant quarters; and if they remain in places from which their work has departed, they may be reduced to positive destitution. Changes of fashion, again—the indispensable amusement of a wealthy class—cause fluctuations of employment, and, in the metropolis and other places frequented by them, the migrations of the rich occasion considerable disturbance of the industry of the poor. The wages that are to be had during 'the season' attract some workers, who forget to look forward to the time when

the season will be over. There are months when a good many men connected with cabs and stables, and a good many dressmakers and washerwomen, are sure to be out of work in London; and it is the same with painters, whose work is interrupted partly by social causes and partly by the weather.

2. A rise of wages is of itself somewhat disturbing to steadiness of habit amongst the working people. So, at least, experience has occasionally shown in manufacturing districts. It has been complained that higher wages tempt the workmen to enjoy themselves more liberally, to drink more, and to disdain the hard economies which can never become unnecessary in their class. Just as in a richer class thoughtless persons are sometimes led into extravagance by a sudden accession to their means, and are thereby made poorer than they were before, so a body of working people, having no ingrained habit of thrift, and being weak against the attractions of geniality, may take to spending more than the increment of their wages in a good time, and may be drawn into idle self-indulgent ways, in consequence of which some may find themselves let down into destitution. This, I admit, is not likely to be more than a

partial and occasional result of commercial prosperity; but some appreciable part of our existing pauperism is probably thus originated.

3. The general influence descending upon the poorer class from the luxurious use of money is in a great degree unwholesome, and expressly unfavourable to the qualities which guard the poor from destitution.

Vice can keep company with poverty as well as with riches; but there is a great deal of vice which is the manifest offspring of idleness and wealth, and which spreads its contagion amongst those who are not wealthy. Prostitution is a constant feeder of pauperism. And the brilliant careers of the fallen women whom only the extravagance of wealth could maintain are far more widely injurious in this way than the struggling existence of the humbler 'unfortunate.' The gay life dazzles and corrupts many; it draws the servants of these women, and other dependents, as well as imitators, into its vortex of recklessness. Drinking habits are invariably fostered by it, and it is a tale told to weariness, how the habit of drinking to excess, more surely than idleness, leads to poverty. Another social mischief—it would scarcely be uncharitable to call it a vice—is horse-racing, which depends

entirely on the support of the rich. Any one who has visited a race-course must have some notion of the quantity of blackguardism which is directly produced, or at least attracted and nourished, by horse-racing. But the mischievous effect of this amusement of the rich is not limited to what can be seen on a race-course. It encourages gambling amongst working men to the remotest corners of the land. According to good evidence, betting upon horses for the great races is the interest which, more than any other, occupies the leisure of the working classes. Politics are nothing to it. The other day, when a good many of the delegates—the picked representatives of industry—were absent at a meeting of the Trades Congress at Nottingham, the experienced Mr. Allan inquired significantly whether there was any horse-racing going on in the neighbourhood. It is needless to say that gambling is antagonistic to thrifty providence. I fear it must be added that game-preserving, another special luxury of the rich, supplies its contingent to the workhouse out of the numbers of those whom it seduces from the dull and poorly paid occupations of agricultural industry.

The rich cannot be blamed for keeping domes-

tic servants. But all who have had any experience in the analysing of pauperism, are aware that a considerable proportion of our destitute persons and families consists of those who were once maintained by domestic service. The phrase 'pampered menials' testifies to the prevalent impression as to the nature of service in the households of the wealthy. This phrase of course applies to men only; and I do not know that it could be said with justice that female servants of any class fall more easily than other women into the ranks of pauperism. But men servants are undoubtedly pampered, and they are also trained to a servile deference; and neither of these conditions is favourable to a thrifty and provident independence. It makes a great difference whether the ways [1] of a household are well regulated or not. There are houses of rich men in which the servants are guarded as far as possible from temptation, and encouraged to look forward to the future, and cared for when they are disabled. But there are also too many houses of an opposite character, where profusion and carelessness tempt the servants to reckless and unscrupulous habits, and where

[1] Perhaps the time will come when servants will require references from those who wish to engage them.

the pampered menials are bribed to submit to caprice and insolence by high wages and opportunities of riotous living. When an improvident butler or footman loses his health or his character, what is to become of him? He is one of the most helpless of men. And he often has a wife and children, sometimes unacknowledged, to whom he has supplied precarious support out of his wages, and who are inevitably dragged down with him. I know of cases in which very liberal help has been given by rich persons to servants, who have been in their households for longer or shorter periods, and who have fallen through some misfortune into poverty; but these cases are not so numerous as they ought to be, and I am now referring to destitution caused by folly and error more than by misfortune.

I must further mention under this head, that general habit of looking up to the rich and depending upon them, that respectful and somewhat servile attitude of mind, which is encouraged in the country districts by the existence of a patronising landlord class, and elsewhere by the willingness of the rich to pay for civility. When we compare the common people in England with the same class in some other

countries, we observe here a much greater humbleness of demeanour towards the upper classes, and a painful want of manners in their behaviour towards one another. It has actually come to be supposed, even by persons of the intelligence of Mr. Auberon Herbert, that when the Catechism teaches children to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters, it is meant that the poor ought to be lowly and reverent towards the rich—as if the Catechism were not to be learnt by the children of the aristocracy. I confess I do not see why, if I walk along a country lane, a respectable father of a family should humbly touch his hat to me whom he does not know, or his children elaborately make curtsies to me, whilst I and my children do not pay the same homage to a duke or a marquis. The truth is that this civility is the expression of a habit of dependence; and, as Lord Nelson courageously testified amongst his own tenantry not along ago, we cannot have the virtues of independence along with the instincts of dependence. Lord Nelson, to his great honour, declared that the rich ought to reverse their customary policy; instead of trying to keep the labouring class dependent, they ought to do their best to compel them to be

independent. If any progress could be made in this direction, the rich would lose a part of one of their pleasures, but their wealth is sure to enable them to purchase still too much civility.

There is another attitude of mind towards the rich, not to be wondered at in those who, being themselves poor, observe the free expenditure of the wealthy classes, which is also unfavourable to economic providence. It is that which finds expression in complaints like this: 'Why should I pinch myself to save out of my paltry wages, when my labour goes to support all this luxury?' Or, to quote more vivid words, 'Why should the English workman live on potato parings, leaving the mealy morsel for his wealthier brother?' It is true that the wealth enjoyed by some is not a good reason why others should allow themselves to sink into dependence; but it must be admitted that a careless disposition may be tempted to find a mischievous excuse for itself in a comparison of the condition of the labouring classes with that of the rich.

4. But the chief way in which wealth breeds pauperism is by administering relief, whether this be done under the poor-law or by voluntary charity. How are the rich—not being cruel or

hard-hearted—to see the poor want, and refrain from relieving their distress? That is the question which the pauperism of this country chiefly forces upon us.

It is perfectly certain, clear enough *à priori*, and proved by incessant practical evidence, that if the poor find help liberally afforded to them whenever they are in want, they will not make painful and difficult efforts to provide for themselves. Why should they? But it is equally certain that it requires a strong conviction of duty in the minds of those who are themselves comfortable and well off to restrain them from feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, with ready kindness. The wealth of this country is so great that we could easily spare much more than we now contribute to the support of the indigent. I have made some attempts to ascertain the relation between the poor-rate—I mean the poor-rate proper—and incomes in London; and I believe I am safe in stating that it is not usual to pay so much as one per cent. of income in poor-rates, and that it is so rare as to be virtually unknown for any one to pay as much as two per cent. Now it cannot be said that it would be at all hard to double this payment, if we could thereby add

greatly to the happiness of the suffering poor; still less, that it is urgently necessary, for the lightening of the burden on the ratepayers, that the present amount should be diminished. We can afford to relieve the poor liberally, and our kind feeling prompts us to do so; and the consequence is that the poor are encouraged to trust to the poor-law and to charity, and many are thus pauperised.

Let me briefly mention two or three illustrative cases which have recently come under my personal knowledge. First, to show how relief is given. S. is a gentleman's coachman; he has married a respectable wife, and has a large family. He falls ill, and goes into a hospital. The wife applies to the parish. Their character is good; there are many young children, and the income of the family is suspended. The guardians humanely allow 10*s.* a week. How can we help being glad of it? F. is a labouring man, a little over sixty, still strong and able to work, with a wife of about the same age. They have now only themselves to keep, but Mrs. F. states, with pardonable pride, that she has had fifteen children in addition to five miscarriages, and that seven of the children are alive and grown up. The man has an attack of bronchitis;

they immediately apply to the parish, and within three weeks of his leaving off work they are allowed 3*s.* 6*d.* a week. Now if S. or F. had belonged to a club, he would have had a still larger allowance during sickness without the necessity of applying to the parish, and if F.'s seven children had made a combined effort, they might have done something—at least for a few weeks—to help their parents. But to subscribe to a club would have cost them some weekly pence, and some trouble; and grown-up sons and daughters in this country are not expected, if they are themselves poor, to succour their parents. Now let me mention a case of an opposite kind. Mrs. P. is a widow, whose husband died four years ago, at the age of twenty-nine. He was a bricklayer, and not always in work. But he was a member of a Foresters' club, and paid the extra subscription to its 'Widows and Orphans' fund. His total payment was 7*d.* a week. In return for this weekly payment he received 14*s.* a week during sickness, 12*l.* were paid at his death to his widow, and she had a permanent allowance of 2*s.* a week for herself, and 6*d.* for each child up to twelve years of age. Having five children, she thus received 4*s.* 6*d.* a week. One of the

children was born between her husband's death and his burial, and the eldest at that time was eight years old; but with these club allowances, and the earnings of a mangle, she has managed to get on without even applying to the parish, the only regular assistance she has received being the payment of her children's school fees. Why she has not asked help from the parish I cannot understand, for she would have been sure to get it, and her life must often have been a painful struggle. But if we compare this case with the two former, we can see, on the one hand, what can be done by the poor when they are determined to be independent, and, on the other hand, what inducements they have for thinking it not worth while to practise provident self-denial. If our wealth and our humanity make it impossible for us to refuse relief, except on hard terms, to indigent applicants, or to allow worn-out parents to be a burden to their children, we must do as our feelings prompt us; but then let us not hide from ourselves the fact that a large part of the pauperism we deplore is of our own creating, nor delude ourselves with the hope that if we grow richer and more humane this pauperism will disappear.

The encouragement given by charity, with its

apparatus of coal and bread tickets, soup-kitchens, and the like, to mendicancy and falsehood and drunkenness, as well as to improvidence, is too trite a subject to enlarge upon. People listen to the proofs of it, and do not attempt to refute them; but after a while they say to themselves, 'How can I enjoy my own comforts, if I refuse a ticket to that poverty-stricken creature?' and in spite of what they have heard, they go on giving the doles which are inadequate to afford real relief, but which unfortunately have power to tempt and degrade the receivers.

These are ways in which general prosperity—which does so much to improve the condition of the working classes, as well as to enrich capitalists—may nevertheless be allowed to engender pauperism. If we earnestly desire to repress pauperism, we must not trust to the natural operation of good times only, but must strive against all influences which we see to be prejudicial to the self-respect and sense of responsibility of the poor.

THE COMBINATIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS, FROM THE CLERICAL POINT OF VIEW.[1]

THE present year, which has been marked in this country by many active and successful Unionist movements amongst the working people of various occupations, is distinguished in particular by a special advance of the principle of combination. Hitherto Trades' Unions have been limited to the class of skilled artisans —men who through apprenticeship or otherwise have learnt some trade in which untaught labourers could not compete with them. Time and inquiry have appeased the more poignant alarms which Trades' Unions were wont to excite. We have learnt to acquiesce in these combinations, if we have not become altogether reconciled to them. But it is a new thing that agricultural labourers should attempt to unite themselves in permanent associations for the

[1] Written for a clerical meeting, and printed in the *Guardian*, August 14, 1872.

purpose of raising their wages or shortening their hours of work. Even in towns, unskilled labourers form no trade combinations. There are obvious difficulties in the way of the establishment of such unions amongst the cultivators of the soil. But the attempt is being made. From South Warwickshire as its centre the union movement has been spreading through half England, communicating its pulse of hope to the huge depressed body of our agricultural population.

It needs no argument to show that this is a very interesting and important social fact. It must excite the hopes or the fears, or both together, of Churchmen looking at things from the point of view of the Kingdom of God, and longing for the time when the whole body shall be fitly framed together and perfectly organised in Christ. It comes peculiarly close to the clergy, because they are so numerous and powerful in the rural districts, where they are more effectively pastors of their flocks than they can be in towns.

Any disturbance of an existing social condition will naturally inspire some apprehensions; but there are strong reasons for believing that as Churchmen and clergymen we ought to regard this movement with satisfaction, and to be

anxious to give it any advantage it may derive from our sympathy.

We may hope that it will improve the *physical condition* of the agricultural labourers, and that it will promote their *moral and social independence.*

1. The direct professed object of artisans in forming Trades' Unions has been to *better their condition.* Other aspirations, I believe, have mingled largely with the motives of those who have fought most perseveringly in the cause of unions, and have given dignity to the struggle. But the higher aims of men are often purest and strongest when they are not put forward and talked about, and the simple public purpose of the combinations of working men in this century has been to take care of their interests.

Trades' Unions have grown up in a natural manner out of the needs of a new order of things. The briefest summary way of describing the change which gave birth to them is probably to say that it was the substitution of '*great* industry,' or manufacturing operations carried on by accumulated capital, for '*small* industry,' or the same operations carried on by master-workmen or very small employers. Under the old system workmen were protected to some effec-

tual degree by organisation and laws which became entirely obsolete in the early part of the present century; under the new system, whilst it increased production and promoted prosperity, the position of the workman was found to be a very insecure and dependent one. Perhaps the first object of unions was to secure *stability* of employment or living; the second, to enable the workpeople to get their share at once of any increase of profits. The endeavour of many years to crush these workmen's combinations by laws and administration is an unhappy example of the way in which a rich class will govern for its own supposed interest, to the injury of the weaker and more dependent. But Trades' Unions have fought their way to legal toleration; and it is scarcely possible for the most prejudiced to deny that they have been advantageous to their members.

It is an axiom that union is strength; and it would be a singular phenomenon if the men of the same trade did *not* become stronger, and were not more able to better their condition by combining together.

Now, if there is a class in the world whose condition cries out to be bettered, it is that of our rural population. It is sickening to us as

Englishmen to read the reports of their wages, of their food, of their housing, of their pleasures. I refrain from giving statistics or particulars; I appeal only to what is undeniable and universally admitted. Why should we be content to have so serf-like a peasantry in England? We go to the Continent, and everywhere we find the cultivator in a better relative and even positive condition than in our own country. He probably has land of his own which he cultivates; he has some political power, or at least is a member of a commune; he is protected by inviolable traditions. In all probability he is very frugal, and he may live hardly; but this does not hurt him. He can look forward to the future, not without hope; he takes care of himself and of them of his own household. But here in England the labourer has no property, no holding, no citizenship of which he can be conscious; he has his scanty wages eked out by allowances, and when he falls ill, or becomes infirm, as a matter of course he becomes a pauper and loses his freedom. I do not say that this description applies to all parts of England, but it does undeniably to many counties.

Well, we hear of the farm labourers becoming dissatisfied with their condition, and forming

themselves into unions in order that they may better it. Shall we not bid them God-speed? The chances must be that they will at least have some success. Suppose the farmers incur at the same time some loss: that need not alter our wishes. When you hear grave complaints of the rise of the wages of domestic servants as a terrible and almost cruel thing for masters and mistresses, it can hardly fail to occur to you that the masters and mistresses are anyhow better off than the servants. And without any ill-will towards farmers we may give our sympathy to those who need it most. No doubt it may be argued that the demands of the labourers will ruin the farmers, and that the soil of England can be cultivated in no other way than by tenant farmers, and that therefore in the resulting collapse of the whole agricultural interest the labourers themselves will be ruined. If all this could be made out, it might be better that the labourers should continue at their present level. But it would be a difficult task to make it seem probable. And it implies, to begin with, that the labourers and their advisers will push unreasonable demands to an extreme. Happily there is no sign as yet of their doing this. Their proceedings hitherto have been charac-

terised by moderation and prudence. And there is very fair reason to hope that the farmers will not lose all that they may be compelled to pay in additional wages. They may get more work out of better fed labourers, and the poor-rate, now so heavy, may be gradually lightened. And the prices of their products are sure to rise, more or less, with the cost of them.

2. But the moral effect of combination, in promoting independence and self-respect, is likely to be far more important than the immediate increase of wages which is the first object and fruit of it.

The farmers in general do not wish the labourers to become more independent; and I fear that some of the clergy, partly through sympathy with employers, and partly through a mistaken ideal, think it better that the poor should remain in subjection.

There can be no doubt that combination amongst workpeople will tend to make them independent. Union, I repeat, is strength; and when men become stronger they become less dependent. Moreover, the habit of meeting together, of standing by one another, of forming plans of common defence, of encouraging each other not to succumb to employers, must pro-

mote independence of character. It must be admitted as possible that this movement may thus in some cases disturb personal relations between farmers and their men which have been easy and not ungracious. No one denies that there are kind and considerate employers and grateful labourers; and it cannot be wondered at that it should seem to some to be a very questionable advantage to agricultural labourers to be set upon regarding their employers as opponents against whom they have to be on their guard, and from whom if possible they are to win a larger portion of their profits.

But the evils of the dependent state are so serious and so clinging, and the responsibility and dignity to which independence is the only avenue are of so much worth, that we ought not to be deterred by such possibilities from sympathising with a movement which will constrain as well as encourage the labourer to stand up for himself. Grown-up men and Englishmen ought not to be taken care of by their richer neighbours,—they ought to take care of themselves. So long as a man is a pauper he is a slave—the only limitation to his slavery being his power to take his discharge when he pleases; and before he is a pauper, the labouring man who

feels his dependence on his employer is hardly a freeman. And you cannot expect the common virtues of freemen from those who do not live in freedom. Improvidence, want of energy and enterprise, childishness of mind, a feeble sense of filial and marital and parental responsibility, addiction to stupid pleasures, are the natural characteristics of persons living under the conditions in which our peasantry grow up. There is something both pathetic and irritating in the complaints which have been uttered by labourers and their wives at the Unionist meetings of this spring. They name their wretched wages, and go on to tell the public how many children as well as father and mother have to be fed and clothed out of them, and they ask despairingly how it is to be done. We may be inclined to reply to them, 'If you had any self-respect, you would not be trying to do it. A young man ought to do anything rather than stay at home and marry and breed children upon such wages.' But the fact is, these people are helpless and acquiescent because their circumstances have made them so. Our labourers are too free or not free enough. If they are to be taken care of like the lower animals, they ought to be restrained like the lower animals. The comparison

between a rich man's stables and kennels and the cottages of his labourers is a fallacious one. No doubt the rich man would keep his labourers in as prime condition as his horses or his dogs if he had the same control over them. But he has not. This being a free country, the most dependent human creature has the liberty to make his house his castle, to frequent the public-house as much as he likes, and to multiply as many likenesses of himself—as it is generally the lot of the poorest to do. The alternative of restraining the freedom of the labourer is not open to us, and therefore we ought to desire earnestly that he may become more of a freeman than he is. We ought to welcome any assertion of independence that may come from himself, with the intention of keeping him to it. It is very likely,—indeed it is certain,—that the labourer will not find independence, with its cares and risks and duties, altogether pleasant. His instinct will be, of course, to claim both the advantages of being independent and the comforts of being dependent. It may take a long time before he really learns providence and the sense of domestic responsibility. But there is no hope of his learning them whilst for a portion of his time he lives on the rate, and for the rest has

scarcely a better living than the rate is obliged to supply to him.

How much an Agricultural Labourers' Union may be able to effect for its members is a question not easy to answer. The objects of the Warwickshire Union are thus described:—To raise wages, to lessen the hours of labour, to promote the improvement of cottages, to obtain allotments, and to assist the migration of labourers. The rate of wages aimed at is 16*s.* a week in ordinary times, and 30*s.* during harvest. There are difficulties in the way of these Agricultural Unions which have not previously been encountered by Trades' Unions. It is a new thing, as I have already said, to form a union of men whose labour is little better than unskilled. A union has hitherto been—I think invariably—the union of a trade,—that is, of men who could not be replaced except by others similarly trained and skilled, of men with reasonably good wages, who could subscribe liberally and subsist for a time without employment. To many Trades' Unionists, I imagine, it must have seemed a hopeless attempt to construct a union of farm-labourers. But besides their extreme poverty, and the nearly unskilled character of their labour, the variations of the seasons must

make it difficult for these labourers in combination to insist on any specific terms. A vigorous and extensive union might have the farmers at its mercy during the height of harvest time; and on the other hand, in winter the farmers might retaliate with painful effect. The danger of carrying a contest to extremity is likely to tell on the men more than the employers. It seems possible therefore that the operations of the unions may be comparatively feeble, and may disappoint those who have hoped for much from them. But it will hardly be denied that the movement has decidedly helped that rise of wages which has been very general in the country districts. It is no small matter that men who have been receiving 12*s.* a week should have suddenly found themselves in the receipt of 15*s.*

I do not pretend to have an opinion as to the demands which may be made with right and with hope of success by the labourers in rural districts. But on two points we need not entertain any doubt. That migration of labour, with which the name of Mr. Girdlestone is so honourably associated, and which is obviously rational and desirable, is an object which a union may wisely propose to itself to promote.

A union may collect and diffuse information on this matter, and may supply the means of travelling, so as to better the condition both of those who go and of those who stay. The other point is the substitution of a money equivalent for the allowances from the farmer by which the labourer's wages have been eked out. That a labouring man should be partly paid in bad cider is an altogether noxious custom. Some of the other allowances are unobjectionable in themselves, but any payment in kind is now humiliating, and a source of discontent. A good-natured farmer will not be prevented from doing good-natured things in his dealings with his men, but it seems to be most desirable that there should be no longer any understanding as to allowances being a supplement to wages. An English working man in these days ought to be able to know exactly what he earns, and to be able to spend his wages according to his own discretion.

There are certain desirable results, therefore, which I think we may confidently expect will be directly brought about by the combinations of agricultural labourers. But I repeat that my main argument for them is that they are sure to increase the self-respect and independence of the

labourer. And his physical condition will be far more effectually improved by growing self-respect than by conflicts and strikes.

But, from the religious point of view, will it be better or worse that the slow mind of the labourer should be quickened by the thrill of independence? Better, I say, a thousand times better. I admit that an ideal, not altogether unpleasing, may be formed of the humble and contented villager, not dreaming of setting up his rights against the farmer, grateful and profoundly respectful to the squire and the kind squire's lady, regarding the parson as a superior being and as good as infallible, regularly attending his church, and having his attendance there favourably noted by his superiors. But this is the ideal of a child rather than of a grown-up man—of a serf rather than a freeman. And it has always been the glory of true Christianity to stir up the instincts of adult responsibility and freedom. The Gospel, as preached by the Apostles and their most faithful successors, has called men to think for themselves and act for themselves. It has sounded the trumpet of awakening. It is quite true that the Gospel preaches submission and meekness; but it is a ridiculous error to suppose that its meaning is

to enjoin the poor to be meek and submissive towards the rich. Those whom the Gospel would specially have humble and meek are the rich and great and strong. 'All of you be subject one to another,' says the Gospel: and which needs to have this witness sounded in his ears most loudly—the depressed and helpless labourer, or the proud lord of thousands of acres; the struggling peasant woman, or the idle lady of fashion? We ought to be ashamed to give one commendation of humility to the poor which we do not repeat ten times to the rich. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low.

I can understand that clergymen, when they see that the spirit of independence may show itself in the throwing-off of some old restraints, and may suggest to a man to give up going to church, should have some fear of it. But they may remind themselves that the church-going which has been endured as a bondage was not of much real value. We must hope for a class of loyal Churchmen amongst our peasantry, who will come to church, not because the squire and the farmer will be angry if they don't, but because they reverence the Church of their fathers, and take an interest in the services and

the sermons, and—I would gladly add—are permitted to have some voice and part in the regulation of its affairs. There is no reason at all why we should despair of such churchmanship amongst our common people. There is some of it in that class already. And I believe there is a good deal of evidence to show that where the working class is strongest and most independent there the Church has most hold of it. In the country districts the labourers are very much in the habit of going off to the Primitive Methodist chapel, where they feel more at their ease and less weighed down by the respectability on the top of them. And it may be reasonably contended that the best chance for a manly religion amongst the poor is in their attainment of genuine freedom.

I would lastly urge how important it is on every ground that the Church, in the persons of its clergy and actively religious members, should be known to sympathise with all movements which have in view the elevation of the poorer people. Even as a matter of policy, this is manifestly important. Whether we rejoice in it or not, our brothers of low degree are being exalted. Power is descending into the hands of the many. If the Church of England is to be the

Church of the aristocracy and the upper classes, it will long retain *prestige* and dignity, but it will be gradually losing real power. We are in no danger of losing the upper classes by taking the side of the lower. The plain way to strengthen the Church for the future is to cultivate relations of sympathy and joint interest with the working people. But I am rather ashamed to use this argument—to speak of the policy of that course which is the duty and the glory of the Church. By its history the Church of England is associated with the rulers of the land. A clergyman claims and is allowed the position of a gentleman. Many of the clergy are rich men, from the endowments of the Church or their private fortunes. But the Church of Christ in all ages and in all lands ought to be the advocate of the poor. When Christ came he began by proclaiming good news to the poor, deliverance to the oppressed, comfort to the suffering. Most distinctly Christ took the social side of the poor against the rich. Almost more truly than the doctrine of justification by faith the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ* might be said to be *sympathy with the weaker*. The more, therefore, we are connected in daily association with capitalists and employers, the more we clergymen of the

Church of England ought to recall to our minds that the side of our Master is the side of the weak. When unions become tyrannical and use their strength to injure a weaker class of non-unionists, the unions will indeed lose that claim upon our sympathy which they have in the fact of their being composed of working men trying to hold their own against the capitalists. But in South Warwickshire and the districts which have followed it the men of the unions are no aristocracy of workmen, but the least prosperous class of the population, whose condition we cannot think of without pity. I contend, therefore, that we ought to wish them well in their efforts; that no fear of offending the landholder or the farmer ought to restrain the expression of clerical sympathy with the labourer; and that we ought to look forward with hope to the time when the peasantry shall be independent enough to make fair terms with those above them, and shall enjoy a larger share than now falls to their lot of the profits accruing from the cultivation of the land.

COMMUNISM:

A PAROCHIAL LECTURE.[1]

IN this lecture on Communism I propose to give some brief illustration (1) of the ideal commonwealths of philosophers, (2) of guilds and trades' unions, (3) of the voluntary Socialism of the present century, and (4) of plans now put forward for the improvement of the condition of the labouring classes. It will be seen, therefore, that I use the word Communism in the wide sense in which it is current in the journalism of the day. According to its strictest definition, it means the possession of everything in common and of nothing in private ownership. But Communism of that absolute degree is entirely a matter of the logical imagination. If there is to be any practical discussion of possible—even of conceivably possible—Communism, we must consider it as a thing of degrees. The general principle running through all degrees of communism is this, that the property

[1] *Good Words*, February, 1872.

of men living together in society should be regarded as belonging *in some sense* to the whole body. 'Then,' some one will say, 'we are all Communists.' So we are, of some degree or kind. It is an important fact, of which we must not lose sight, that the principle of Communism can hardly be stated in any general form which shall not demand universal acquiescence. Differences arise in considering how that principle should be carried into effect. The differences are endless. Questions of such difficulty present themselves in dealing with the subject of public claims and private rights, that I very much doubt whether any one here knows precisely where his Communism begins and where it ends.

There are those who think that there is irreverence and danger in discussing these questions at all. They would have property treated with the respect due to a divine mystery, as a thing not to be approached even in thought without delicacy and caution. They speak often of the *sacredness* of private property. Now various objects have been sacred in various religions. But it is not the Christian religion that has ever consecrated private property. To a Christian trained in the authoritative writings of our faith the notion of treating pri-

vate property as something sacred ought to seem utterly strange. The *common* interest is invariably exalted over the *private* in the Bible. The principle of private property receives contumelious rather than reverent handling in the New Testament. The common interest, on the other hand, is associated with all that we are taught to hallow most reverently and to seek most devotedly. It is enough for me to remind you of the history of the Day of Pentecost. The Christian Church, which began to exist on that day, finds in the events of it the germs and the laws of its whole subsequent existence. An impulse, we believe, then came fresh from heaven to create a brotherhood of those who had acknowledged Jesus as Lord. Three thousand souls were moved to repentance and faith. And of these it is recorded, 'All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.' This was Communism, almost of the absolute degree. The first impetuous fervour of Christian feeling gave its consecrating sanction, not to the principle of private ownership, but to the principle of surrendering private ownership for the sake of the common happiness.

Private ownership has its strength, not in religion or reflection, but in the spontaneous impulses of human nature. Put religion and reflection aside, and there is no fear of the principle of private property being called in question. A man naturally likes to have his own things, and to do what he likes with his own. He may go further, and like to have his neighbour's things also; and that inclination has sometimes been erroneously described as communistic. But it is not Communism if I take anything from anybody in order that I may appropriate it to myself. The thief, even more than the honest citizen, is a votary of the private-property principle. Religion and reflection, though they may recognise individual ownership as an indestructible condition of human life, and may see many advantages resulting from it, find that their work lies, not in asserting the principle or stimulating the instinct of such ownership, but rather in proclaiming an opposite principle, that of united interest, as higher and worthier, and as having a divine right to rule over the other.

It is true that the weaker may discern that it is to their personal advantage that many things should be possessed in common; and a great

deal of the actual Communism that has prevailed in social arrangements has been due to this perception. The weaker have held together, and by so doing have been able to procure arrangements favourable to their condition. But the same fact has induced thoughtful and benevolent persons, with no view to their own interest, to advocate the same policy. If you draw back in thought to a mental position from which you can contemplate society as it is, and speculate how it might be improved, the sufferings of the poor and the follies of the unthinking and unstable will be sure to engage your attention. You may think yourself incompetent to form any theory at all about the improvement of society. It is just possible you may persuade yourself that nothing better can be devised than the competitive struggle for existence in which the helpless go to the wall. But if you have imaginative enterprise enough to construct an ideal scheme of social constitution, your scheme will almost inevitably be more communistic than the existing arrangements of society. Thoughtful speculations about society may be said to incline all but universally towards a more developed Communism.

There are some famous examples of philoso-

phical speculations of this kind. By far the most important of them is the 'Republic' of Plato, a work in which the Greek philosopher, living some time before Christ came, attempts to design a well-ordered and ideally perfect state. He finds absolute Communism to be an indispensable condition of such a state. But there is another work of the same class, immeasurably inferior, indeed, in interest and value to Plato's, but which it will suit our present purpose better to use as an illustration. I mean the 'Utopia' of Sir Thomas More.

This work is at least a very singular one to have been written by its author. Sir Thomas More was the son of a judge, and himself a lawyer. He was employed by Henry VIII., who made him first a Privy Councillor, and afterwards, in succession to Cardinal Wolsey, Lord High Chancellor. 'Utopia' appeared in 1516, the year in which More was admitted into the Privy Council. It is the account of a happy island, described by a traveller who had lighted upon it, which enjoyed representative government, vote by ballot, and annual magistrates. But the basis of the Utopian institutions was Communism. The writer grows enthusiastic in his denunciation of the mischiefs resulting from

property. I must mention that the original work was in Latin, and that the translation from which I am about to quote was made by Bishop Burnet, a distinguished political prelate. It is curious to think of the following passage as coming from such an author and translator—not from some penniless agitator, but say from a Sir William Page Wood, and an Archbishop Tait :—

Thus have I described to you as particularly as I could the constitution of that commonwealth which I do not only think to be the best in the world, but to be indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves that name. In all other places it is visible that, whereas people talk of a *commonwealth*, every man only seeks his own wealth ; but there, where no man has any property, all men do zealously pursue the good of the public ; and, indeed, it is no wonder to see men act so differently, for in other commonwealths every man knows that, unless he provides for himself, how flourishing soever the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger; so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public. But in Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they do all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything ; for among them there is no unequal distribution ; so that no man is poor, nor in any necessity ; and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich ; for what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties, neither apprehending want

himself, nor vexed with the endless complaints of his wife? He is not afraid of the misery of his children, nor is he contriving how to raise a portion for his daughters, but is secure in this, that both he and his wife, his children and grandchildren, to as many generations as he can fancy, will all live both plentifully and happily, since among them there is no less care taken of those who were once engaged in labour, but grew afterwards unable to follow it, than there is elsewhere for these that continue still at it. I would gladly hear any man compare the justice that is among them, with that which is among all other nations; among whom may I perish if I see anything that looks either like justice or equity. For what justice is there in this, that a nobleman, a goldsmith, or a banker, or any other man that either does nothing at all, or, at best, is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendour upon that which is so ill-acquired, and a mean man, a carter, a smith, or a ploughman, that works harder than even the beasts themselves, and is employed in labours that are so necessary that no commonwealth can hold out a year to an end without them, can yet be able to earn so poor a livelihood out of it, and must lead so miserable a life in it that the beasts' condition is much better than theirs?

Is not that government both unjust and ungrateful that is so prodigal of its favours to those that are called gentlemen, or goldsmiths, or such others that are idle, or live either by flattery, or by contriving the arts of vain pleasure; and, on the other hand, takes no care of those of a meaner sort, such as ploughmen,

colliers, and smiths, without whom it could not subsist; but, after the public has been served by them, and that they come to be oppressed with age, sickness, and want, all their labours and the good that they have done are forgotten, and all the recompense given them is that they are left to die in great misery; and the richer sort are often endeavouring to bring the hire of labourers lower, not only by their fraudulent practices, but by the laws which they procure to be made to that effect; so that, though it is a thing most unjust in itself to give such small rewards to those who deserve so well of the public, yet they have given these hardships the name and colour of justice, by procuring laws to be made for regulating it?

Therefore I must say that, as I hope for mercy, I can have no other notion of all the other governments that I see or know, than that they are a conspiracy of the richer sort, who, on pretence of managing the public, do only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts that they can find out; first, that they may, without danger, preserve all that they have so ill acquired, and then that they may engage the poorer sort to toil and labour for them at as low rates as is possible, and oppress them as much as they please; and if they can but prevail to get these contrivances established by the show of public authority, which is considered as the representative of the whole people, then they are accounted laws; and yet these wicked men, after they have, by a most insatiable covetousness, divided that amongst themselves with which all the rest might have been well supplied, are far from that happiness that is enjoyed among the

Utopians; for the use, as well as the desire, of money being extinguished, there is much anxiety and great occasion of mischief cut off with it. . . . I cannot think but the sense of every man's interest, and the authority of Christ's commands, who, as he was infinitely wise, and so knew what was best, so was no less good in discovering it to us, would have drawn all the world over to the laws of the Utopians, if pride, that plague of human nature, that is the source of so much misery, did not hinder it; which does not measure happiness so much by its own conveniences as by the miseries of others; and would not be satisfied with being thought a goddess, if none were left that were miserable, over whom she might insult; and thinks its own happiness shines the brighter by comparing it with the misfortunes of other persons; that so, by displaying its own wealth, they may feel their poverty the more sensibly.

On two points of modern interest, Sir T. More is very advanced. With reference to the customary hours of labour, he speaks as follows: 'They do not wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning to night, as if they were beasts of burden, which as it is indeed a heavy slavery, so it is the common course of life of all tradesmen everywhere, except among the Utopians; but they, dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint six of these for work.' He anticipates the objection, that this allotment of time would not be suffi-

cient for the work necessary to be done, and meets it by replying that the Utopians allowed no class of men to be idle, nor any time to be wasted on frivolous work. These rules being enforced, 'a small proportion of time,' he says, 'would serve for doing all that is either necessary, profitable, or pleasant to mankind.' As to the studies and employments of women, he reports that in Utopia all the women learn some trade; that men and women of all ranks go in large numbers to hear lectures of one sort or another, according to the variety of their inclinations; and even that 'the women are sometimes made priests, though that falls out but seldom, nor are any but ancient widows chosen into that order.'

I cannot explain, for I confess I do not understand, how such speculations as those of the Utopia could have been given to the public without offence by Sir T. More in the reign of Henry VIII., or by Bishop Burnet in the reign of Queen Anne. What I have quoted will at least show you that Communism of the most extreme degree has had charms for others besides the poor and the ignorant. And there is this further significance in such speculations: what was thus worked into shape and written

out and published by one man, a benevolent and thoughtful Christian, may be assumed to represent a very general undeveloped feeling in others who meditate on the same facts and occupy themselves with the same problems. Misery and degradation in the lowest class, luxury and insolence in the highest, cannot be thought about without generating a persuasion that society as a whole ought to have some remedy or other for such violations of its idea.

From the speculations of philosophers I pass to actual forms of social life which grew up amongst men who did not reason about what was desirable, but felt what they wanted. The Guilds of the Middle Ages were organisations in which common people united themselves together from the simple motives which at all times have prompted men to voluntary association. They are divided into three classes: the first consists of religious guilds; the second of town or merchant guilds; the third of craft or trade guilds. Confining our attention to this country, we may regard these three classes as standing chronologically in the same order. The religious or social guilds were the earliest; then, as towns grew by degrees into organised existence, the town guilds, otherwise called

merchant guilds, came into being as the original form of municipal corporations; and later than these, grew up the craft guilds, in which men of the same trades associated themselves together.

The religious guilds were formed of men and women who came into voluntary association in order to carry out purposes of piety and mutual aid. They were benefit societies, burial clubs, and religious associations, all in one. These were very numerous in England from the Saxon times onward. They commonly bear the name of some saint or festival, and a portion of their income is spent on the appropriate devotions, the rest being applied to the relief of members and of the poor. They were formed, as I said, of men and *women*. For both wives and single women were admitted as members. The ordinances or rules of a large number of guilds have been printed in a recently published volume from returns made in the reign of Richard II., and now preserved in the Public Record Office. From this volume I select some illustrative ordinances.

A guild of the commonest type was that of St. Katherine, Aldersgate. I quote from its rules:—

The first point is this, that, when a brother or sister

shall be received, they shall be sworn upon a book to the brotherhood, for to hold up and maintain the points and articles following; . . . . and that every brother and sister, in token of love, charity, and peace, at receiving shall kiss every other of those that be there. Also, if it so befall that any of the brotherhood fall in poverty, or be anientised[1] through eld, that he may not help himself, or through any other chance, through fire or water, thieves or sickness, or any other haps, so it be not on himself along, through his own wrecchedness (misdoing), that he shall have in the week 14*d.*

Then follow rules as to entrance money, subscriptions, attendance at St. Botolph's Church, burials, election of new members, &c.

The following extract is from the ordinances of the guild of St. Michael-on-the-Hill, Lincoln, founded in the year 1350. The original of this is in Latin.

Whereas this guild was founded by folks of common and middling rank, it is ordained that no one of the rank of mayor or bailiff shall become a brother of the guild, unless he is found to be of humble, good, and honest conversation, and is admitted by the choice and common consent of the bretheren and sisteren of the guild. And none such shall meddle in any matter, unless specially summoned; nor shall such a one take on himself any office in the guild. He shall, on his admission, be sworn before the bretheren and sisteren,

[1] From the French *anéantir.*

to maintain and to keep the ordinances of the guild. And no one shall have any claim to office in this guild on account of the honour and dignity of his personal rank. If any brother or sister of the guild has fallen into such an ill state that he is unable to earn his living, and has not the means of supporting himself, he shall have, day by day, a penny from the bretheren and sisteren of the guild, in the order in which their names stand on the register of their admission to the guild; each brother or sister giving the penny in turn out of his own means.

Another guild, with a special interest attaching to it, is that of the Lord's Prayer, at York. It is thus described in the Latin return :—

Once on a time a play, setting forth the goodness of the Lord's Prayer, was played in the city of York, in which play all manner of vices and sins were held up to scorn, and the virtues were held up to praise. This play met with so much favour that many said, 'Would that this play could be kept up in this city, for the health of souls and for the comfort of the citizens and neighbours.' Hence the keeping up of that play became the whole cause of the beginning of this brotherhood. And so the main charge of the guild is to keep up this play, to the glory of God the maker of the said Prayer, and for the holding up of sins and vices to scorn. And because those who remain in their sins are unable to call God their Father, therefore the bretheren of the guild are, first of all, bound to shun company and businesses that are unworthy, and

to keep themselves to good and worthy businesses. And they are bound to pray for the bretheren and sisteren of the guild, both alive and dead, that the living shall be able so to keep the guild that they may deserve to win God's fatherhood, and that the dead may have their torments lightened.

The account goes on to give the rules of the guild. They are to keep a table showing the meaning and use of the Lord's Prayer hanging against a pillar in York Cathedral, and a candle-bearer with seven lights near this pillar. And whenever the play of the Lord's Prayer is played in York, the brethren of the guild are to ride, clad in one suit, with the players through the streets, to do honour to it, and to insure that order shall be kept. As in every guild, the brothers or sisters are to be helped in time of need, and to be honoured at their burial.

The guild-merchant of a town was, in its strictest form, the union of all persons having land or any share in land within the town boundaries. It was called guild-merchant, or trading-guild, because these burghers or citizens were thus associated with a view to the regulating of their common or various trades. It is this union of citizens as such that is called on the Continent the *Commune*. The guildhall in

any town is the place where the citizens meet in their guild-merchant.

The guild-merchants seem to have grown, historically speaking, out of the ordinary or voluntary guilds. Three stages may be remarked in the following examples. The guild of the Blessed Mary, at Chesterfield, begun A.D. 1218, has all the usual provisions as to devotions and as to help to be given to the brethren, but it is said to have been founded to hold certain services, and the better *to assure the liberties of the town.* The rules require all to swear to guard all their liberties, within town and without town, and to give trusty help thereto whenever it may be needed. This is not called a *gilda mercatoria* or guild-merchant, but it comes near one. The next case is that of a guild at Coventry. The merchants of Coventry, being far from the sea, found themselves much troubled about their merchandise, and applied to Edward III. for a charter for the foundation of a guild-merchant. The charter (A.D. 1340) states that King Edward, 'so far as in us lies,' enables the men of Coventry to establish their guild-merchant, and to make ordinances. The ordinances given in the return make no mention of any matters except those which are com-

mon to guilds in general; and, unless there were supplementary ordinances, it does not appear that this guild-merchant differed from other guilds. It was a rich corporation, however, and it maintained a lodging-house with thirteen beds to lodge poor travellers, with a governor of the house and a woman to wash their feet. But there is a very elaborate set of ordinances of the city of Worcester, dating 1467, of which the title is as follows:—'Ordinances, constitutions, and articles made by the king's commandment, and by whole assent of the citizens inhabitants in the city of Worcester, at their *yeld marchaunt* (guild-merchant), holden the Sunday in the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the year of the reign of King Edward IV. after the Conquest, the sixth.' These regulations settle a multitude of details as to the municipal government and trade of the city. I select a few points of interest. It is required that the commons may have knowledge from year to year how the common ground is occupied, and by whom, and if that it be not rented, the commons to seize it into their hands, to the end that they may be remembered of their right, and to have profit and avail thereby. There is a provision that if any man's wife

become a debtor in buying or selling, or hire any house for her life, she may be proceeded against as a woman sole merchant; and that an action for debt be maintained against her, to be conceived after the custom of the said city, without naming her husband in the said action. Here is an early prohibition of the truck system of wage-paying. A custom had grown up that the masters and makers of cloth should pay their labourers in mercery, victual, and by other means, and not in silver, to the great hurt of the said artificers, labourers, and of the poor commonalty. Therefore 'it is ordained from henceforth, by this present guild, that none artificers, labourer, or any other person of the said city, against his assent, will, or agreement, be not compelled or charged to receive nothing in chaffer, but in gold or silver, of any makers, chapmen, or sellers of cloth.' Any one presuming to do the contrary was to be fined each time, half the fine to go to the commons of the city, to be put in their common coffer, there to be kept to the profit of the said commonalty. And this was not to be evaded by the employment of workpeople outside the town to the hurt of the poor commonalty of the city. Another article refers to the election of Mem-

bers of Parliament. 'They shall be chosen openly in the guildhall, by such as dwell within the franchise, and by the most voice, and not privily. And the said persons so chosen for the parliament, that they be at it to the end of the parliament, and that they *be served of their wages accustomed*, after their coming home, within a quarter of a year next following.'

As industrial life grew and expanded, guilds of the third class were naturally evolved. These were the associations of persons engaged in particular trades. Trades being commonly called crafts, these are designated *craft-guilds*. It appears that there was considerable jealousy and antagonism between the town guilds, or communes, and these trades' unions. The jealousy was on the side of the older, or municipal organism, which sought to keep down and control the new developments of industrial power. The conflict between them, which ended in the conquest of freedom and independence by the trades' unions, may be illustrated by a struggle between the municipality of Exeter and a craft-guild of tailors in the fifteenth century.

Edward IV., by letters patent, in 1466, empowered the tailors of Exeter to form them-

selves into a guild, and to assume control over all persons of that trade in Exeter. This incorporation was thought to infringe upon the liberties of the town or the privileges of the municipality. Accordingly about ten years later, we find records of great troubles at Exeter. The tailors'-guild sought to enforce payment of fees to the guild by tailors of the town; and being resisted, they went, arrayed in warlike fashion (*modo guerrino arraiati*), with force and arms, that is to say, with jacks and doublets of defence, with swords, bucklers, glaives, and staves, into the houses of offenders, and beat and threatened them. The mayor and commonalty, with great trouble and expense, got up a case against the tailors, and brought it before the king in council; who thereupon made a formal award, defining in disputed points the respective jurisdictions of the corporation and the guild. But the discussion did not end here. In the twenty-second year of Edward IV. (1481) the corporation present a petition to Parliament in which they enumerate their grievances, and pray that the tailors' letters patent and the said guild and fraternity, and all things pertaining to the same guild and fraternity, be irrite, cassed, adnulled,

void, and of no force nor effect;' and by the advice of the lords spiritual and temporal, and with the assent of the commons of the realm, the prayer is granted. Notwithstanding which Act of Parliament, we find the guild going on and prospering. The living social force prevailed. Probably the tailors became strong in the municipal council, or they were backed up by other crafts having the same interests. At all events, the guild is not dissolved, but flourishes; it makes new ordinances in 1500, exhibits an inventory of goods in 1504, and adds new ordinances again under Henry VIII., in 1516 and 1531.

These craft-guilds were in the strictest sense of the term *trades' unions*, and their ordinances are far more comprehensive and interfere far more with individual liberty than the laws of any modern trades' union have attempted to do. But there is, nevertheless, a fundamental difference between the craft-guild of the fifteenth century and the trade union of the nineteenth, which I will endeavour briefly to explain.

The craft-guild was an incorporation of masters, the trade union is a combination of workmen.

But this distinction will be misleading unless we take into account a mighty change in the

form of industry, to which manifold new conditions are owing. The change is from *small* industry to *great* industry. Originally, every master in a trade was a working man. This is the natural commencement of manufacturing industry. It begins in a small way. And in a primitive condition of society, when little capital has been accumulated, and populations are scanty, and means of locomotion excessively restricted, industry will remain small. But as towns flourish and trade increases, the craftsmen save money and become comparatively rich, and are able to employ assistants, and so are developed into small capitalists. Capital, once securely realised, tends to grow with rapidity, and manufacturers become to a considerable extent employers of labour. This was the history of the craft-guilds of the Middle Ages. They became companies, such as those which still retain names and possessions and give splendid dinners in the city of London. These guilds were very close and exclusive, and became such hinderers of the general prosperity that Lord Bacon called them in his day 'fraternities in evil.' But still the most important manufacturing industries remained 'small,' or comparatively small; they were carried on to a

great extent in cottages; until they were revolutionised by the application of steam to manufactures and the accompanying development of capital.

The modern form of industry has without doubt added immensely to the wages of the working classes, and in most points improved their condition. But it disorganised them. It made the 'hands' into mobile parts of a vast machine, liable to be left idle or thrown aside, whenever it became the interest of capital to change its point of application. The employers became relatively powerful to an almost unparalleled degree. There was hardly ever any section of society, perhaps, more unorganised, more destitute of the mutual attachments by which men hold together, than the working classes of this country would be without trades' unions.

It appears that for some two centuries the interests of the working people were chiefly protected by the Statute of Apprentices, of the 5th Elizabeth, and by customs which had grown into authority under that statute. According to this act, no one could lawfully exercise, either as master or as journeyman, any art, mystery, or manual occupation, except he had been brought

up therein seven years, at least, as an apprentice. Rules were laid down as to the taking and keeping of apprentices, and it was enacted that journeymen must be kept in a certain proportion to apprentices. As to journeymen, it was enacted that in most trades, no person should retain a servant under one whole year, and no servant was to depart or be put away but upon a quarter's warning. The hours of work were fixed to about twelve hours in summer, and from the day dawn till night in winter. Wages were to be assessed yearly by the justices of the peace or the town-magistrates, at every general sessions first to be holden after Easter. The same authorities were to settle all disputes between masters and apprentices, and to protect the latter. They were to assess the wages so as to 'yield unto the hired person, both in the time of scarcity and in the time of plenty, a convenient proportion of wages.' Now this act, when steam and machinery had been introduced together, became unsuited to modern conditions of industry. It was finally repealed in A.D. 1809. But when you bear in mind that such a statute had been removed, and that it was not replaced by any analogous legislation, and that the new conditions of industry tended of themselves to

put the work-people in crowds into the hands of capitalists, you will not wonder that the working classes felt their way to some combinations by which they might protect themselves against injury and secure some regularity and stability of life.

Trades' unions composed of working men are accordingly a characteristic growth of the present century. I observe an extremely interesting illustration of their history in a recent report of our consul in Saxony. You will see all that I have described occurring in a narrower compass, and with more marked features. I abridge from Mr. Crowe's report in a Blue Book of this year.

The Saxons, frugal, hard-working, and abstemious, were more generally engaged as artisans and mechanics in proportion to the population than any people in Germany. It was calculated that every thirteenth man was master, journeyman, or apprentice to some corporate trade. In Saxony the domestic, as distinguished from the factory system, was longest preserved; and improvements in steam and machinery were slowest in making way. In no country was the corporate spirit of the earlier times more instinct with life, and nowhere was it found more difficult to compass the abolition of guilds. Till ten years ago, with the exception of country masons, carpenters, sweeps, and bakers of rye-bread, there was not a man of any

craft who did not necessarily belong to a guild. The number of masters—frequently the number of journeymen—was strictly limited. Wages were regulated by custom, being the same for the good, the middling, or the still less skilful hand. Mastery was dependent on a long course of travel, years of apprenticeship, and examination. . . . The measures which really undermined the guilds were passed to facilitate the establishment of factories; the causes which precipitated their fall were the construction of railways, the consequent extension of markets, and the demand for cheaper and better wares. As the factory system expanded the guilds shrank, and the population outgrew the old and stationary corporations. From 1840 to 1850 the factory system arose. From 1850 to 1860 the guilds languished. In 1861 they were abolished by law.

Mr. Crowe goes on to describe various results of this change, which, he says, are still only in their beginnings. But the only observation I shall quote is the following:—

Nothing is more remarkable in the meanwhile than that, parallel with the efforts made to free labour from all artificial interference, we have to notice the agitation of a class of men who, under the guise of reformers, seek to re-establish, in a new shape, the old constraint of the guilds. That the State has to protect the working classes against the despotism of capital, that it is the duty of trades' unions to establish tariffs of prices which shall exclude piece-work, ignore skill, and place the bad and the middling hand on the

same level as the good, is the creed of a party which now wields a certain power in Saxony.

It is remarkable, I admit, but it is also most natural and reasonable. Men who had matured such a character as the Saxons had by the aid of trade-organisation were not likely to acquiesce in being transformed into drifting aggregations of unorganised units.

Trades' unions must seem extremely moderate and practical forms of association when we compare them with other developments of the same principle which also belong to the present century, and of which I now go on to speak. The theories and experiments to which I refer are commonly classed under the general title of Socialism. This term is used with nearly the same looseness or comprehensiveness as Communism. Those who discriminate between them would in most cases understand by Socialism some variety of association which does not involve the abolition of private property, and by Communism the system of having all things in common.

The many changes which came together in the latter part of the last century and the earlier part of the present, amongst other results, had the effect of setting speculative minds at work on schemes of social reconstruction. And the

schemes of recent social theorists, unlike those of Plato and Sir Thomas More, were intended by their originators to be carried out into immediate practical effect, and have actually been put to the test of experiment by enthusiastic disciples. The names of leading importance in the tentative socialism of the nineteenth century are those of Owen, St. Simon, and Fourier; the chief scene of the experiments has been the United States of America. The necessary element for these schemes is enthusiasm, disengaged from old beliefs. Without the enthusiasm no one could go heartily into the reconstruction of society; and where the old beliefs remain, enthusiasm would devote itself to other tasks than a revolutionary reorganisation of the world.

It is difficult for us English people to do justice to the motives and characters of these rebuilders of society. They for the most part differ much from us in creed; they are excessively fanciful and sanguine; and their failures are ludicrous. What more can be wanted to alienate an Englishman? Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that a man would hardly be a socialist or communist without being moved by an interest in the welfare of his fellow-men, and that it is almost always pity for the suffering and the degraded that feeds the socialist

fire. The more genuine socialists are men of honourable enthusiasm for the elevation of the lower classes, willing to make sacrifices in their cause. Socialism has been promoted, not *by* the poor, but *for* the poor; and it is altogether a mistake to connect it with personal greediness. It is a remarkable fact, which would hardly have been expected beforehand, that voluntary or experimental socialism should have attracted more adherents in the United States than anywhere else. This is surprising, because the most powerful argument for social reconstruction in the Old World is found in the miseries which are so much less prevalent in the New. It is difficult to see what common-place advantages Americans can look for in socialist life, which they have not at command already. But the truth is that Socialism is a product of hope and enterprise, much more than of decay and despair.

The three men whom I have named were all contemporaries. In 1825, when St. Simon died at the age of sixty-five, Owen was fifty-four and Fourier fifty-three. St. Simon and Fourier were authors. Owen was a successful man of business. They were equally fanatical believers in their own doctrines.

St. Simon was as ambitiously comprehensive

in his system as other Frenchmen are apt to be. I can only mention here his leading social maxims, which are these :—

All social institutions ought to aim at the amelioration, moral, intellectual, and physical, of the greatest and poorest class.

All the privileges of birth, without exception, are to be abolished.

To every man according to his capacity; to every capacity according to its works.

In order to carry out the first principle, society was to be organised under the heads of religion, science, and industry. The leaders in each department were to constitute the government. Science and industry were alike holy; all property was church property; every vocation was a religious function.

The second principle involved the abolition of inheritance. The State was to be the ultimate owner of all land and realised property, and was to assign or distribute it to individuals according to capacity and merits.

There was, therefore, to be no community of goods. The St. Simonians believed in the natural inequality of men, and regarded it as the very basis of association, and the indispensable condition of social order.

Marriage was not to be abolished. Christianity, they said, has lifted women out of servitude, but it has condemned them to subordination. The St. Simonians announce their definitive enfranchisement, but without pretending to abolish the holy law of marriage proclaimed by Christianity.

After the death of St. Simon, a number of his disciples formed a kind of sect or church in his name at Paris, and also carried on for a while some industrial speculations in accordance with his principles. St. Simon exercised a very important influence on some able and distinguished men, but the St. Simonian organisation in a very few years came to an end.

Robert Owen first became known as the head of a great manufacturing business at New Lanark, in Scotland. In that capacity he produced admirable and much-admired results, by deliberately making the moral and physical well-being of his work-people his primary consideration. Being seduced into speculative philosophy, he adopted as his main principle the conclusion, which is certainly not a bad rule for educators and managers to be guided by, that every man is what his circumstances make him, and that in order to improve men you must improve their circumstances. It was natural

that a preacher of this principle should desire to create model circumstances; and turning his thoughts to America, as furnishing the most favourable conditions for a new community, he went over in 1824, and bought an estate upon which a small religious community, founded by a German named Rapp, had already been planted. The estate, having been named Harmony by the Rappites, was called New Harmony by Owen. Here a society of nine hundred members came together, and endeavoured to form perfect circumstances, that the circumstances in turn might form perfect men. Owen not only established this community himself, but he preached his doctrine very earnestly by lectures and appeals to kings and congresses, and the result of it was that, about 1826, some eleven Owenite associations were founded in America. They were mostly small, and none of them lasted more than three years.

Fourier's doctrine is difficult to describe in a few words, but it took a strong hold of a number of able and good men, especially in the United States. His great idea was to make labour attractive. He thought that by grouping people together, and planning their hours and ways of work, he could contrive such arrangements that

all the natural instincts and passions should fall into harmony and be utilised, and all mankind should be made perfectly happy. He occupied himself especially with organising the labours of cultivation, and undertook to secure that they should be equally productive and delightful. His system also, like St. Simon's, was based on inequalities. He held that in an order prudently arranged, the natural and social inequalities that follow will be the surest pledges of concord and harmony. By skilful arrangement and grouping all faculties would be exercised, all instincts satisfied, all organisations would mutually support and complete each other.

It was a difficulty in the way of trying Fourierist experiments, that to do justice to the system it was necessary to try them on a very large and costly scale. The only attempt made in France broke down before it came into action through lack of funds. But Fourier's system, having fascinated one or two ardent American minds, was preached and expounded by them in the year 1842 with considerable effect. Thoughtful and religious men believed that Fourier had at least pointed out the direction in which attempts should be made to realise a perfect social life. It has been said that 'a yearning towards social

reconstruction has become a part of the continuous, permanent, inner experience of the American people.' As many as thirty-four communities are named as having owed their origin to the Fourierist movement of 1842. The most considerable of them, called the North American Phalanx, founded by Albert Brisbane and Horace Greeley, continued to exist for twelve years, from 1843 to 1855. But most of the communities, being in general very small, fell to pieces very rapidly. The promoters lay the blame in general on the faults of the members. Greeley, the well-known journalist, and one of the early disciples of Fourier, speaks thus of those who joined the communities :—

A serious obstacle to the success of any socialistic experiment must always be confronted. I allude to the kind of persons who are naturally attracted to it. Along with many noble and lofty souls, whose impulses are purely philanthropic, and who are willing to labour and suffer reproach for any cause that promises to benefit mankind, there throng scores of whom the world is quite worthy—the conceited, the crotchety, the selfish, the headstrong, the pugnacious, the unappreciated, the played-out, the idle, and the good-for-nothing generally; who, finding themselves utterly out of place and at a discount in the world as it is, rashly conclude that they are exactly fitted for the world as it ought to be.

So we can easily imagine. But then this question presents itself. What particular advantage would there be, either to the world or to themselves, in drawing out the noble and lofty souls and setting them to live together in an agricultural phalanx? Life, we know, even to those of us who have means, and who are fit to be members of Fourierist communities, has its troubles and discouragements; but they are mostly of the sort that could not be cured, and would not have any promise of being cured, by a system of farming in groups. The only real attraction of socialistic schemes is their promise to strengthen the feeble and to make the poor comfortable. If they are to succeed by excluding the poor and the weak, what is the good of them?

There is, however, another hindrance to the success of such communities besides this which made Mr. Greeley so bitter. Family life and community life do not agree well together. We should have thought so beforehand, and so it has proved. There is a sort of parody on Socialism in the success and long continuance of two grotesque associations in the United States, that of the Shakers and that of Oneida, which get rid of the domestic difficulty in two

opposite ways. The Shakers maintain absolute celibacy, the Oneida people have wives and children in common. Both these bodies sustain themselves, like the Mormons, by very peculiar religious pretensions, which must be accepted by all who join them.

The common English mind, we may safely assume, is not likely to be fascinated, either by the reconstructive schemes of philosophers, or by the experiences of those who have tried to carry such schemes into effect. We are not, however—how could we be?—content with our present social condition, nor without aspirations after the improvement of it. It is scarcely possible to be religious or thoughtful at all without revolving plans of some kind by which social miseries may be cured or social happiness increased. A portion of such plans may be described as communistic, whilst others belong rather to the individualistic class. It remains for me to complete my rapid sketch of Communism by speaking very briefly of projects now entertained which have for their purpose to make realised wealth more serviceable to the poorest class.

And at this point it will be most convenient for me to describe an attitude of mind towards

such proposals, in which I think I could almost compel you—even if it were against your will—to go with me. I speak to humane and Christian persons. I recall to your minds the teaching of the New Testament and the instincts of humanity. Now if certain plans were proposed to you by which it could be shown to your satisfaction that, at the cost of some of the wealth of the rich, the condition of the poor could be made permanently more easy and more secure against degradation, would you not joyfully accept them? You cannot say no. Well then, when attempts are made to devise such plans, what have you to say to them? If you refuse to listen to them, you may say that you know beforehand that all such plans must be delusive—that they will fail to attain their end, or that the end is not worth the disturbance and apparent injustice by which it would have to be sought. But overwhelming proof can be given that *all* such plans are *not* delusive. Who objects, for example, to the providing of parks open to the common people at the public cost or by the gift of the rich? Who disapproves of the support of national education out of the taxes? or of the compelling of landowners to sell their land for railways, and of railway companies to

carry passengers at one penny a mile? Some of the plans in question are, however, manifestly delusive. If they are, no one ought to favour them. Therefore, I conclude, we all sympathise with the object of such plans; but we think it necessary to consider carefully whether they are calculated to attain their end or not.

It is possible, also, to disapprove of *the temper* in which schemes are advocated. And in this light, the International Working Men's Association, which is now the object of many ardent hopes and grave fears, may justly incur censure. Its original design was that of uniting together the artisan and labouring classes in the different countries of the world, so that mutual aid might be given in the common effort to raise the working class. But the society has apparently fallen into the hands of eloquent foreign leaders, trained to revolutionary movements, who delight in invectives against capital, and who substitute vague but exciting phrases for practical measures. The aim of the society, we are told, is nothing less than the expropriation of the expropriators. It is a fine phrase, but who is to say what it means? Such language is as little congenial to the English atmosphere as the proposal that Citizen Dilke should be the first president of the

English republic. As regards, however, the violent and minatory language of Continental democrats, I venture to say that we are hardly in a position to judge it reasonably. It is the habit of foreigners to speak excitedly. And then there is the language and policy of their opponents to be considered. If we see two persons fighting and abusing one another, we do not disapprove of one party only. Thus we can hardly judge the people of Paris and what they did, fairly, without comparing them with the provincials and what they did. At the same time it has an unreal effect, and is in every way to be regretted, that English workmen should speak to the public through the mouths of un-English revolutionists.

One of the most ambitious schemes which has been put forward by the International Society is that of the acquisition of the land by the State. On the great scale, it seems impossible to imagine how this could be done. But there is no *à priori* reason why more of the land should not belong to the public than is at present the case amongst ourselves. In Switzerland, the Communes hold a great deal of land, which they either keep for common use, or let to tenants at a rent. It seems to be simply a question of

good policy whether it would be well for us to adopt the same custom, or rather to spread it more widely, amongst ourselves.

Another project, admitted by the International Society into its programme, but too moderate to satisfy its more ardent spirits, is the promotion of co-operative industry. We shall probably all agree in holding that every hindrance ought to be removed out of the way of co-operation. But if it is proposed that the State should advance capital for this purpose, all sorts of objections arise, which the working people themselves are perfectly able to appreciate.

I pass on to the recent proposals of a new social movement, introduced with a moderation of tone which conciliated even Conservative peers. These proposals were seven in number.

The first two, I must say, appear to me to be chimerical upon the face of them. It was proposed that working men and their families should be housed in cottages with gardens at a moderate rent; and that food should be sold retail at wholesale prices. As to the latter, it would be simpler to enact that any one who would call at a certain office at a certain hour of the week should receive a shilling or so out of the public funds. The provision and regulation

of public markets is another matter; what I understand to have been proposed is the selling of food at a reduced rate. This, I think, will not bear consideration. In seeking the other object, pleasing homes for all, we find ourselves grappling with the difficulties of space and time. We cannot live both in London and out of it. We could all get houses at a lower rent, and with gardens, in the country; but then we should lose the advantages of living near our work in London. The working people know very well that their housing is simply a matter of wages. Increase a man's wages and he will be able to get into a better house. The distressing cases are those of people with the lowest wages and the largest families. For such persons everything is a difficulty,—food and clothing at least as much as house-room. If you are to give to them out of the public funds, you may as well give them one necessary as another.

Whenever the State undertakes to provide for the maintenance of any class, it will have to do it at some sacrifice of their liberty. This is a consideration which disposes of all the invidious comparisons between poor people's houses and the fine stables and kennels of the rich. The rich might keep the poor in the luxury of the

lower animals, if at the same time they controlled their liberties as they do those of the lower animals. In a paper advocating the first proposal, Mr. George Potter quotes from another writer a ludicrously imaginative account of the way in which a Swiss municipality would place its working people in agreeable homes. There would be other criticisms to make on this account; but I restrict myself to observing that the author quietly slips in the remark that the municipality would *flog the idle, the drunken, and the dissolute.* This condition surely deserves attention. Would the poorest people in this parish desire to be housed at somewhat lower rents by the Marylebone Vestry, with the understanding that the Vestry would flog the idle, the drunken, and the dissolute? As a member of the Vestry, I should wish to decline this unpleasant responsibility.

The third proposal is that the hours of labour be shortened. On this point it might be enough to say that the working men in many employments throughout the country have just gained, through the determined combination of a portion of them, a definite reduction. But I will add an interesting quotation :—

When Cromwell had abolished the feasts at Christ-

mas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, and other festivals commonly called holidays, as tending towards superstition, and had introduced the strict observation of Sunday, the apprentices who by this 'were deprived not only of the benefit of visiting their friends and kindred, but also of all set times of pleasure and lawful recreations,' petitioned Parliament for the appointment by law of one day in every month for these purposes, and Parliament thereupon set apart for them the second Tuesday in every month. The masters, it appears, were in no way pleased at this, and curtailed their apprentices in the enjoyment of their 'play days;' whereupon Parliament, on a further petition from the apprentices, ordered that on these fixed play days all shops should remain closed.[1]

The remaining four points are as follows: (1) A further organisation of local government; (2) Technical instruction for skilled workmen; (3) Public parks, buildings, and institutions for innocent and improving recreation; and (4) The adequate organisation of the public service for the common good. There is nothing revolutionary in any of these demands. They are matters for administrative zeal and ability, and not for any struggle between classes, or conflict of parties. I should have supposed that there were subjects of greater importance, and of more interest to the working classes, now engaging

[1] English Guilds, p. clix.

public attention, such as the regulation of the sale of liquors, the abolition of the truck system, or the management of mines. But any judicious practical suggestions for promoting the above-mentioned objects of the Social Movement would, I think, be generally acceptable.

There is one inference to be drawn from this list of proposals, put forth by Mr. Scott Russell, on behalf of some active representatives of working-people; I mean, that it was not found possible to unite working-class opinion in favour of certain projects which do not appear in the list; such, *e.g.*, as that of aiding emigration largely with State funds, or that of multiplying in some way or other very small holdings of land. Both these projects are tempting; the former especially has excited a great deal of desire and hope. But it has been shown that one of the chief advantages looked for from emigration on a large scale—the thinning of the labour market at home—would be neutralised immediately by the *im*migration of cheap Irish and foreign labour. There is no country in Europe—I believe, not the most prosperous—in which the wages are not considerably lower than they are in England, and in which the working people do not live, in respect of food

and clothing at least, somewhat more hardly. As regards the cultivation of land in small holdings, not only is there the primary difficulty of obtaining possession of the land and settling the cultivators on it, but the same causes which have changed the small industry to the great in manufactures seem to make it certain that the large cultivation must supersede the small in agriculture also.

Similarly, most projects which have in view the direct promotion of the economical interests of the working classes prove to be on examination either delusive or impracticable. For the raising of wages, the direct specifics are freedom of trade and of locomotion, and the accumulation of capital. Whatever tends to make men rich, tends also to increase employment and to raise the rate of wages for the poor. But whatever can be done to improve the social condition of the common people—to make their life more comfortable, more healthy, and more civilized—is of high value to the working classes in general; and if more can be done to this effect at the cost of those who are better off, that is a kind of Communism with which I have tried to persuade you that we all ought to sympathise.

The improvement of education, the creation

of parks and gardens and fountains, the opening out of streets, the best sanitary arrangements, the provision of medical aid, the building of markets, and the like, may partially be promoted, as they have been, by the voluntary gifts of the rich. If they are to be made independent of the casual goodwill of the benevolent rich, the cost of them must be provided out of the rates. All such benefits involve a proportionate raising of our rates, and that places an obstacle in their way, which is apt in this country to be a difficult one to get over. If you read accounts of America or of Switzerland, which are the two model countries as regards the working people, and see with admiration and envy how much is done for education and in the general interest of the most numerous class of the citizens, you cannot help wishing that we should in some such respects imitate them. But if you also inquire what rates are paid in those countries, you will be amazed. The rates are not only what we should call high, but they are several times as heavy as ours are. We cannot hope to have great public improvements without paying for them. But then we are met by the appeal in behalf of 'the poor rate-payer.' It is common to speak as if the rate-payer were already bur-

dened as heavily as he could possibly bear. That is only a way of talking; but could we not do something to meet the case of the poor rate-payer, without giving up the hope of more ambitious public improvements? I wish we could have the question of *graduated rating* taken into serious consideration. I have sometimes thought that a special rate for improvements above the necessary class might be laid, like the income-tax, on the more affluent. But it would be a simpler and more thorough plan to rate according to an ascending scale; and I do not see what better use the rich could make of their money than to pay liberally, under compulsion, towards all improvements which would tend to civilise the general life of the population. Only travellers know how much we, in wealthy England, are in such respects behind many poorer countries.

Now—to bring this rapid survey to a conclusion—let me ask what duty or policy it seems to suggest to the rich and to the poor respectively. It urges the rich to remember the old truth, that they are not owners but trustees of what they possess, and that it is the law of God the Creator that the capital held by any member of the community should be made serviceable to

the community as a whole. The rich are bound to be on their guard against doing harm by their riches—against demoralising the poorer classes, as they do so largely, by profligate expenditure, by careless almsgiving, by the temptations of their domestic service, and in other ways. Where riches abound, there will be employment and high wages, diffusing much general prosperity; but it is almost certain that there will be at the same time a pauperised residuum, the dregs of a wealthy nation, ruined by the fluctuations of employment and by the corruption of their self-respect. Whilst they should very earnestly consider how not to do harm, the rich are bound also to consider how they may do good. We want amongst our rich people, hardly more good nature or kindness, but much more of the *communis sensus*, more patriotic ambition, more enterprise in promoting public benefits. Why should they not be more emulous of the Athenians of old, of the Americans of to-day, in public liberality?

To the working people our review suggests that they should strive to make themselves independent by combination. Let them combine—not in benefit clubs that are sure to break, nor in strikes that are sure to fail, but judiciously;

let them try to *insure* themselves against the fluctuations of employment, against sickness, against old age, against the over-eagerness of capitalists, by wholesome combinations in as many forms as they find expedient. In policy, let them press for, not State grants, that might bring windfalls to some, but such public improvements as might benefit all equally, and such as might reasonably be provided by a wealthy State for the mass of its citizens. Let them cherish the practical spirit of Englishmen, with its suspicion of wild schemes and extravagant promises.

Many of us are neither rich nor poor; we have no power to make imposing gifts, and no inducement to join co-operative societies or trades' unions or benefit clubs. But we have great influence on opinion and policy, peculiar opportunities of binding classes together. Let us use our opportunities for humane and Christian ends. We are subject to a double magnetism, and are drawn on the one hand towards the rich, on the other hand towards the poor. We may yield ourselves to either attraction; but let us remember that it is the spirit of the world that tempts us to make up to the rich, whilst the spirit of Christ bids us sympathise with the humble and the poor.

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